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Nicola Benedetti

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GRAMOPHONE

US & CANADA SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Bowles

'Complete Piano Works, Vol 1'

Bernstein For Paul Bowles^b **Bowles** Four Latin American Pieces^a. Two Portraits^b. Portrait of Five^b. La Cuelga^b. Constance Askew in the Garden^a. Folk Preludes^b. Three Piano Arrangements^b. Six Preludes^a. Three Songs (arr Kasparov)^c. Sonata for Two Pianos^c
Thomson Souvenir: Portrait of Paul Bowles^b
The Invenia Piano Duo

(^aAndrey Kasparov, ^bOksana Lutsyshyn *pfs*)
Naxos American Classics © 8 559786 (59' • DDD)



Because Paul Bowles concentrated his creative energies on fiction writing from his late thirties up until his death in 1999 at the age of 88, his early career as a composer gets relatively little attention. Hopefully this first volume in a series of releases devoted to Bowles's piano music will rectify that situation. Most of the works here are miniatures that are modest in scope yet generous in charm and wit, the exception being Bowles's 1947 Sonata for two pianos, composed for and first recorded by the great American duo of Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale.

Terse and punchy counterpoint characterises its first movement, along with unexpected silences and quick allusions to waltzes. A long, austere and melancholically melodic *Molto tranquillo* follows, giving no hint of the rhythmically complex, cluster-filled third movement to come. Andrey Kasparov and Oksana Lutsyshyn are both on top of the notes and inside the music; the rhythmic complexities and tricky *tutti* attacks don't faze their ensemble synchronicity one iota. Bowles's application of mixed metres in the two Huapangos from the *Four Latin American Pieces* are cut from the same cloth as Copland's better-known *El Salón México*, although *La Cuelga*'s quick-change modulations signify an original voice, as do the ungeneric twists and turns throughout a group of small portraits written in tribute to friends.

The latter works gain context heard alongside portraits of Bowles by Virgil

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Piotr Szewczyk

The violinist on commissioning and performing works for his album 'Violin Futura'



What inspired you to start this project?

I wanted to create a new collection of short solo violin works by tapping into the creative potential of living composers. While many great contemporary pieces are out there already, there wasn't a collection similar to Paganini's 24 Caprices written in the 21st century yet. Instead of having one composer write them all, each piece in 'Violin Futura' was written by a different composer, showcasing an incredible diversity of contemporary music.

How did you choose the composers?

I reached out to composers I knew personally, and then I announced a call for works to select the next group, and asked them to write new pieces for this project.

What were the biggest challenges?

As with all contemporary music, the first challenge was interpreting pieces that have never been played before and representing

very different aesthetic directions. How much interpretative freedom does each piece allow for? What are the parameters I can work within? The other challenge was to organise them in a sequence that would create an engaging narrative for the listener, creating a larger 'meta-piece'.

What's next?

I want to continue performing these fascinating works and hope they will inspire other violinists to commission composers for their own projects, and realise how many incredibly talented living composers are out there. For more information, please visit www.violinfutura.com.

Thomson and Leonard Bernstein. Among the Six Preludes, notice No 3's sly references to Chopin's A major Prelude, while the raggy asymmetry of No 4 might be described as Charles Ives without the rough edges. Several piano arrangements preserve incidental music from theatre productions for which the original orchestral scores are lost. Three lovely examples of Bowles's prolific song output are rendered in stylistically apt piano-duet arrangements by Kasparov, who also provides informative and scholarly annotations. A valuable release at any price. **Jed Distler**

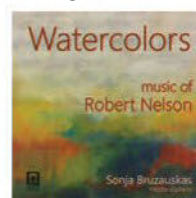
Nelson

'Watercolors'

Bowls^a. On the Question of Angels^b. Sapphire^c.

Two Cabaret Songs^d. Two Love Lyrics^d. Watercolors^d. Zoo Stories^e

Sonja Bruzasukas *mez* ^c**Anne Leek** *ob* ^a**Alexander Potiomkin** *cl* ^e**Brian Thomas** *hn* ^{ac}**Christopher Neal**, ^b**Sophia Silvios** *vns* ^c**Wayne Brooks** *va* ^{ac}**Christopher French**, ^b**Anthony Kitai** *vcs* ^e**Timothy Hester**, ^{abd}**Tali Morgulis**, ^{bc}**Roy Wylie** *pfs*
Delos © DE3499 (74' • DDD • T)



Septuagenarian composer Robert Nelson – who joined the music faculty at the University of Houston in 1968 and is currently Professor Emeritus of Music Theory and Composition, as well as

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It's a massive, haunting score, with four movements that run a gamut of emotions...Also striking is his ability to balance modern elements with wisps of nostalgia...”

- DON ROSENBERG, *NPR.org*

PHOTO: J. HENRY FAIR

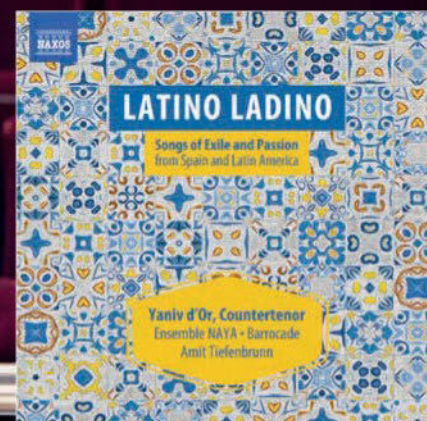
Photo: Bernard Musil

LATINO LADINO

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Holding us all enthralled throughout the evening was Yaniv d'Or, whose smooth toned, powerfully resilient countertenor voice has earned him much international success in early opera and oratorio especially.”

- ENSEMBLE MAGAZINE



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Mezzo-soprano Sonja Bruzauskas is joined by 'a raft of talented Houston musicians' for Delos's disc of works by Robert Nelson

co-author of five music theory books – has had a long-term affair with the voice, words and poetry. In addition to writing five operas, the most recent being *A Room With a View*, Nelson served 15 seasons as musical director and composer-in-residence for the Houston Shakespeare Festival, during which time he composed original scores for 22 of Shakespeare's plays. On his first CD for Delos, Nelson teams up with mezzo-soprano Sonja Bruzauskas, who participated in ECM's 2015 recording of Morton Feldman's *Rothko Chapel* (which is in Houston – 1/16) and a raft of talented Houston musicians in a programme that demonstrates his range of styles and interests, from cabaret songs to a full-length children's entertainment.

The most eagerly anticipated will be the 25-minute *Zoo Stories*, in which Bruzauskas, hornist Brian Thomas and pianist Timothy Hester sing, narrate and otherwise engagingly carry on (the cycle opens with Thomas playing the theme from *Ein Heldenleben* with wild abandon); but the original stories by Kate Pogue, each with a surprisingly serious moral and populated by complex characters, go on at such length that many children might consider this a tale for adults. More memorable are *Sapphire*, *Two Love Lyrics* (to Shakespeare and TS Eliot) and *Bowls*, set to five haunting poems by Ava Leavell Haymon, Poet Laureate of Louisiana 2013-15. **Laurence Vittes**

Reale

Seven Deadly Sins^a. Composers' Reminiscences. Violin Sonata, 'Celtic Wedding'^a. Holiday Suite^a
Jessica Mathaes vn ^a**Colette Valentine** pf
 Naxos American Classics © 9 70204 (65' • DDD)



Austin Symphony concertmaster Jessica Mathaes, its youngest-ever and the first

woman to hold the post, captures the essence of the American composer Paul Reale in a quartet of premiere recordings, leading off with *Seven Deadly Sins*, written for Mathaes in 2009. As an irreverent, tonal SoCal composer would, Reale chose the Seven Deadly Sins – as enumerated by Dante – to serve as both an amusing 20-minute party game in case any of the sins apply to any listeners, and a Hogarthian morality play; both have their pleasant tonal moments but the outcomes, as they should be for sinners, are not particularly nice. Reale's Greed slinks, Gluttony boozily invokes Beethoven's Fifth and Sloth lumbers destructively on the rails of a passacaglia. Throughout it all, partnered with a rich palette of colour by Colette Valentine, Mathaes plays as if she were the heroine in a fantasy – and indeed, she is posed accordingly on the CD cover complete with a white violin. The two take a more sober, powerful approach to the 2007

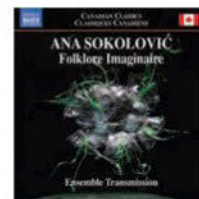
revision of Reale's impressively large Violin Sonata, a serious personal statement subtitled *Celtic Wedding* based on a wedding song from Brittany made popular by The Chieftains.

Reale, for four decades a mainstay of the Southern California composing scene, returns to fun and games in *Holiday Suite* and *Composers' Reminiscences*, the latter a *tour de force* for solo violin consisting of free impressions of seven composers; and while Reale gives the game away in Haydn and Paganini, he deals more subtly with Bartók and more sentimentally with Ives.

Laurence Vittes

Sokolović

'Folklore imaginaire'
 Vez. Portrait parle. Trois Etudes.
 Mesh. Un bouquet de brume. Ciaccona
Ensemble Transmission
 Naxos Canadian Classics © 8 573304 (58' • DDD)



Born in Serbia but resident in Montreal for more than 20 years, Ana

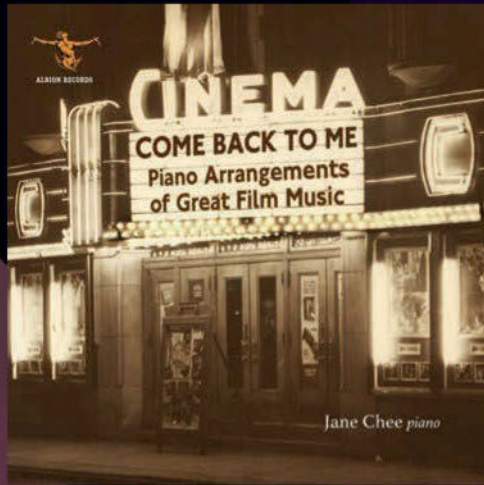
Sokolović has been taken to the heart of the Canadian composing community – she even composed two operas for Toronto's Queen of Puddings Music Theatre – and now heads the instrumental composition department at the Université de Montréal. It's no surprise that for this all-Ana

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The Daedalus Quartet perform works by Joan Tower on Naxos's newest release of the composer's works

Sokolović release, including three premieres, Naxos's Canadian Classics series has recorded music in which her concern for the instrumental sounds themselves seems more paramount than that for the more subtle role played by the folk music roots which give the CD its name.

Vez for solo cello, for example, is like hearing a cellist in another room warming up before singing a long, lovely, haunted song. Similarly, in their organic nature, Sokolović's *Mesb* threatens to make a star of the solo E flat clarinet, with Central European and *Till Eulenspiegel*-ish overtones vying for attention before long, quiet stretches end it all; and *Un bouquet de brume* creates a futuristic skein of fluttering beauty for bass flute and piano.

Portrait parle for piano trio, inspired by a police physiognomy chart, Paris, 1900, is more self-conscious in its goals and attitudes, but even so long stretches go when there is little movement but tons of sheer ecstatic beauty, using the high registers of all three instruments. The grand finale brings all six members of the Montreal-based Ensemble Transmission together for a slow-fused, dynamite *Ciaccona*, 14 minutes vibrating *Boléro*-like with mood changes, sensuous dance tunes and tambourines, and a raft of false endings. **Laurence Vittes**

Tower

String Quartets - No 3, 'Incandescent'^a; No 4, 'Angels'^a; No 5, 'White Water'^b. Dumbarton Quintet^c

^aBlair McMillen *pf*

^aMiami Quartet; ^bDaedalus Quartet

Naxos American Classics © 8 559795 (64' • DDD)



Naxos's fourth all-Joan Tower CD presents the premiere recordings of three quartets and a piano quintet, composed over a 10-year span and performed by two outstanding American quartets. Although there are similarities to the style throughout the 64 minutes of music, their shape and content are tied closely to the title each comes with.

Chamber Music Monterey Bay commissioned Tower's Fifth Quartet, *White Water*, inspired by a vast Bill Viola video installation; not surprisingly, the music has an aquatic feel and flow, faint voices of whales caught in the currents of its arc and movement, leading to an exquisite, radiant end. Bard College and the South Mountain Association commissioned the Third Quartet, *Incandescent*, to celebrate the college's new Frank Gehry-designed concert hall, and it was premiered by the Emerson Quartet, who have since played it more than 20 times. Its absorbing, appropriately architectural design includes Shostakovich-like scurryings on a path leading to wonderful violin, viola and cello cadenzas. The New Mexico-based Music from Angel Fire commission of the Fourth Quartet,

Angels, which was originally intended to celebrate the organisation's 25th anniversary, also served to express Tower's thanks to her angels for the recovery from a stroke of her younger brother.

The Dumbarton Oaks Foundation's commission of a *Dumbarton Oaks* Piano Quintet put Tower in heady company – the Foundation's only two previous commissions had gone to Stravinsky and Copland – and she responded with a characteristically angular, nervous and dynamic score tempered by the piano's warmth and an intriguing range of combined sounds. **Laurence Vittes**

'Spain'

Debussy Lindaraja^a. La puerta del vino. La soirée dans Grenade **Falla** El Amor brujo - Suite. Fantasia bética. Homenaje: 'Le tombeau de Claude Debussy'. El sombrero de tres picos - Dances. La vida breve - Two Spanish Dances^a

Vanessa Perez, ^aStephen Buck *pfs*

Steinway & Sons © STNS30036 (66' • DDD)



Vanessa Perez's previous solo releases – both devoted to Chopin (VAI; Telarc, 8/12) – revealed a pianist with an excellent technique, a passionate, impulsive temperament and a sometimes cavalier approach to the text. By contrast, the musical portraits of Spain comprising her

A man in a tuxedo and a woman in a red dress are shown from the chest up. The man is on the left, wearing a dark tuxedo jacket, a white shirt, and a dark bow tie with white polka dots. The woman is on the right, wearing a red strapless dress and a thin gold chain necklace. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

4
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Pianist Venessa Perez explores music with a Spanish flavour

first outing for the Steinway & Sons label showcase a more centred, straightforward artist. The three dances from Falla's *El sombrero de tres picos* are cases in point, while the suite from *El Amor brujo* also contains memorable features. Notice, for example, the stylish understatement with which Perez shapes the right-hand melody against the left hand's billowy chords in 'Canción del fuego fatuo', along with the crisp repeated notes of 'Danza del terror'.

However, her quest for clarity and cleanliness in the 'Danza ritual del fuego' yields stiff results, especially when you consider Arthur Rubinstein's far more incisive, swaggering rendition (RCA). The same holds true for Falla's *Fantasia bética*, where some of Perez's erstwhile impulsiveness might have infused the reading with more energy and dynamism. Even the lyrical, introspective central Intermezzo sounds as if it's parked in neutral when measured alongside Miguel Baselga's stronger rhythmic definition (BIS).

Rhythm proves Perez's weak point in Debussy's two Spanish-tinged selections. While her little expressive nudges in 'La puerta del vino' convey attractive tonal allure, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet finds comparable nuance and colour without fussing over the basic habanera pulse (Chandos, 7/07). Likewise, Perez's amorphous trajectory in 'La soirée dans Grenade' pales next to Bavouzet's shapelier, more meticulously voiced

interpretation (1/08). However, Debussy's *Lindaraja* and Falla's Spanish Dance No 2 receive vibrant and characterful performances, buoyed, I suspect, by the presence of second pianist Stephen Buck. The recorded sound is full-bodied and well defined but a little too close-up and dry for music that calls out for a more resonant ambience. **Jed Distler**

'Violin Futura'

Solo violin works by Jason Bahr, Mason Bates, Richard Belcastro, Clifton Callender, Tyler Capp, Patrick Castillo, Lan Chee-Lam, Carson P Cooman, Lisa R Coons, Lawrence Dillon, Moritz Eggert, Aaron Einbond, Mark Grey, Jeffrey Harrington, Jianjun He, Sydney Hodkinson, Kari Henrik Juusela, Daniel Kellogg, John Kennedy, Marc Mellits, Hiro Morozumi, John Oliver, Carl Schimmel, Adam Schoenberg, Laurence Sherr, Gary Smart, Suzanne Sorkin, Jorge Sosa, Piotr Szewczyk, Ng Wah-Hei, Ethan Wickman and Nathan Williamson

Piotr Szewczyk *vn*

Navona © ② NV6028 (110' • DDD)



What an enterprising musician Piotr Szewczyk is. The Polish-born violinist and composer commissioned 33 violin miniatures from an international array of composers between 2006 and 2010,

performed them in recital as part of his 'Violin Futura' project and devoted his doctoral treatise at Florida State University to the endeavour. He plays all of the works on this two-disc set.

Trying to assess 33 pieces without making a laundry list is futile and beside the point. As Szewczyk writes in his summary of the project, the works represent 'eclectic and expressive musical languages of various styles and aesthetics of deeply personal expression'. The results of the violinist's efforts are most fascinating in the diversity of techniques, moods and colours the composers summon in their pieces, all of which have highly programmatic titles. (All right, just a short list: Mark Grey's *Left for the Dogs*, Tyler Capp's *Scatterbrain*, Adam Schoenberg's *Swoosh* and Suzanna Sorkin's *Toward the Other Shore*.)

Szewczyk leaves much to the imagination of the listener, who is encouraged to programme the tracks in any order and even narrow the selections 'to only specific archetypes'. That may sound like hard work, but the pieces are so concisely crafted and often compelling – and sometimes really fun – that one can only give in and applaud the scope of the project.

And it's no small matter that Szewczyk is a violinist of exceptional finesse and flair. The composers on these discs could hardly find a more impassioned advocate for their music.

Donald Rosenberg

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Grappling with the issues facing the industry

Before beginning this, I turned to see what I'd written a year ago when I last returned from Classical:NEXT. This, by way of reminder, is the annual gathering of the classical industry – labels, distributors, representatives of artists and venues – where plans are shared, ideas aired, and deals done. Much holds true a year on. Readers have much to look forward to with regards to forthcoming releases. There is still as much passion and belief as ever in the importance of making music, and making that music available as widely as possible, and for posterity.

Equally familiar was that the changes brought about by digital delivery of music – be that downloading or streaming – dominated many a conversation. But whereas, a year ago, the debate was about how streaming was *going* to change our industry, a year on it's no longer about looking ahead. That change is here. Recent statistics from the IFPI, the international record industry organisation, reveal that across the entirety of music – from pop to polyphony – digital music has now overtaken physical (ie CDs) in terms of industry revenue, and that within that, streaming is about to overtake downloads. Streaming revenues are now four times what they were just five years ago, and that's helped the overall industry to grow by 3.2%.

That's a snapshot of a complicated picture of course – there are markets, such as Germany and Japan, where physical sales are much stronger than digital. There's also the gulf between what labels earn from paid subscription services and the much lower figure from free, ad-funded services, despite the much higher usage of the latter. That needs addressing: recordings cost



Martin

money to make, and without income labels cannot take the risks with new artists and repertoire which are a crucial catalyst of creativity. I also believe that it's important to maintain a link in people's minds between creativity and cost. But it's worth noting that there are now an estimated 68m people paying to subscribe to a streaming service – up from 41m just a year ago.

It's usual at this point to insert the caveat that classical music is different to other forms of music in the way people collect it and explore it. But while acknowledging some truth in that, I'd also like to ask: why *should* that necessarily be? I chaired a conference session on streaming at Classical:NEXT, and sitting on my panel was the CEO of X5 Music, a company which presents classical music through digital compilations and playlists, and which this year expects to deliver an extraordinary 600m classical streams. His view is that classical music, if part of a non-genre-specific streaming service, becomes music like any other – that tomorrow's classical listeners look, well, just like anybody else. That's an inspiring thought. Less than a week later, X5 Music was bought by Warner Music Group: quite a statement of belief in the importance of streaming from a major label.

I'm aware that this editorial has been somewhat business-focused. But behind the recordings which enhance our lives are people and organisations with bills to pay, and it's important that, as listeners, we understand and engage with the issues they face. For without the record industry – in whatever future form it takes – there would be no recordings.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'I was intrigued when I heard that Nicola Benedetti's new disc paired Glazunov and Shostakovich concertos,' writes

CHARLOTTE GARDNER who interviewed the violinist for our cover feature. 'It sounded like a change of recording direction for her, which she confirmed over the course of a very honest and immensely enjoyable interview.'



'The music of Reger has been a private passion of mine for many years, so it has been great to share my

discoveries for this centenary feature,' writes **GAVIN DIXON**. 'He still has an image problem, but his charming and lyrical music speaks for itself. I hope I can persuade you to take the plunge and explore his unique musical world.'



'Encapsulating Latin American classical music in anything less than a multi-volume encyclopedia is a

daunting endeavour,' writes **ANDREW FARACH-COLTON**, who tackled that task for us this month. 'I'm so grateful to have been guided by some extraordinary musicians whose tireless advocacy is bringing this music the attention it deserves.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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EDITOR'S CHOICE 7

The 12 most highly recommended recordings of the month

FOR THE RECORD 8

The latest classical music news

Reviews

RECORDING OF THE MONTH 28

Pianist Nicholas Angelich's superb exploration of three pillars of the Romantic repertoire for Erato

ORCHESTRAL 30

Gál's glorious piano concerto; four magnificent Nørgård symphonies on two releases; lesser-known 18th century composers; Bruckner and Wagner from Thielemann in Dresden

CHAMBER 50

An impressive debut by the Varèse Quartet; Brahms and Bruce from Bliss; Butler's Beasts; Argerich and friends are Live from Lugano

INSTRUMENTAL 62

Brilliant Beethoven and Chopin from Budu; Osborne pairs Feldman and Crumb; an intimate lyra viol recital from Boothby; Katt on the organ

VOCAL 74

Dufay's later Masses get an excellent recording; St John's launches its label with Harvey's choral music; Reger in a fine disc from Bernius

REISSUES 86

Bryce Morrison on Sony's set of André Watts and Rob Cowan explores DG's Bamberg box

OPERA 88

Leoncavallo's *Zazà* from Opera Rara; a strong case made for *La Rondine*; the elder Scarlatti's genius revealed by McGegan; Domingo in Verdi

REPLAY 96

Rob Cowan's round-up of archive explorations, including Barbirolli in Nielsen and Mahler

BOOKS 98

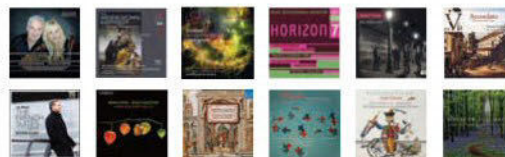
A new Satie study from Caroline Potter and *The Penguin Book of English Song*

GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION 104

Nalen Anthoni explores the available recordings – and the scoring – of Haydn's Symphony No 48

NEW RELEASES 126

REVIEWS INDEX 128



Features

NICOLA BENEDETTI 10

Charlotte Gardner meets the violinist and music ambassador as she releases her new recording of Shostakovich and Glazunov concertos

MAX REGER 16

The composer died a century ago this May, yet despite the advocacy of Schoenberg, he became something of a peripheral figure. Gavin Dixon makes the case for exploring his music

MUSIC OF LATIN AMERICA 20

As the world's gaze turns to Rio de Janeiro for the Olympics, Andrew Farach-Colton explores the music of the wider region

THE MUSICIAN & THE SCORE 48

Hugo Shirley meets Imogen Cooper to explore Chopin's Fourth Ballade, which the pianist has just recorded for Chandos

ICONS 60

Alan Curtis, musicologist, harpsichordist and conductor died a year ago. David Vickers pays tribute to this period-performance pioneer

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS 72

In the composer's 70th birthday year, Paul Griffiths celebrates Colin Matthews's music

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED 100

Carlos Kleiber's 1975 recording for DG of *Die Fledermaus* is under the spotlight this month

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE 102

Philip Clark explores recordings from the past 50 years where jazz and classical have met

PLAYLISTS 111

Ring out those bells! And more Max Reger

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS 112

The best classical music concerts worldwide

HIGH FIDELITY 115

Miniature speakers and online listening

LETTERS & OBITUARIES 124

MY MUSIC 130

Actor Martin Shaw on his love of singing



SHANGHAI
OPERA

雷雨

THUNDER STORM

Modern Opera



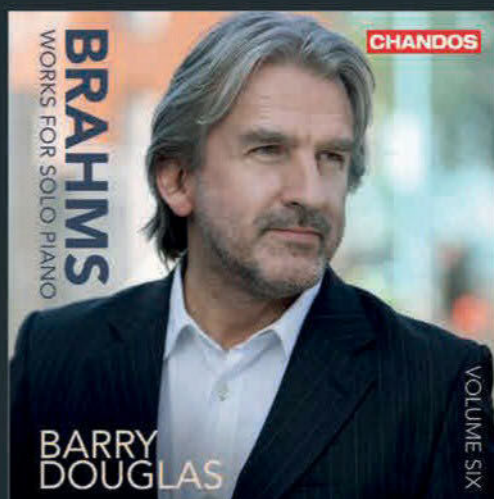
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Disc of the Month

Brahms: Works for Solo Piano, Vol. 6

Barry Douglas

The sixth and final volume in Barry Douglas's survey of Brahms's output for solo piano is now out! This completes a 441-minute project in which 'every sound is resonantly Brahmsian... Douglas's tone is a deep velvet cushion, the legatos full of affection and the rhythms galvanised with great energy' (*BBC Music*).

CHAN 10903

2 CDS FOR THE PRICE OF 1



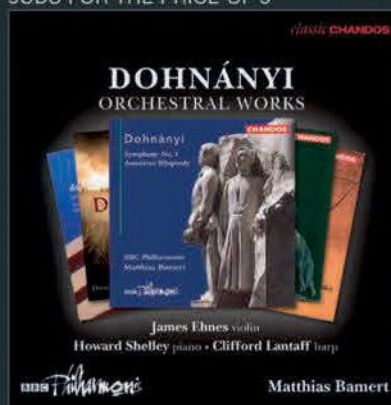
Bacewicz Complete String Quartets

Silesian Quartet

In its first recording for Chandos, the multi-award-winning Silesian Quartet presents the complete string quartets by Grażyna Bacewicz. These Polish counterparts to the quartets by Bartók and Shostakovich reflect one individual's response to political trauma as well as an era's shifting musical currents.

CHAN 10904(2)

5CDS FOR THE PRICE OF 3



Dohnányi Orchestral Works

James Ehnes / Howard Shelley
Clifford Lantaff / BBC Phil.
Matthias Bamert

This box-set features the most famous works of a composer who for many years was little-known and unjustly neglected. With contributions from James Ehnes, Howard Shelley, and Clifford Lantaff, the collection, with the BBC Philharmonic under Matthias Bamert, is a must-have.

CHAN 10906(5) X



The Pleasures of the Imagination

Sophie Yates

Our exclusive artist Sophie Yates here focuses on English harpsichord music, after successful recordings of French and Spanish music and a highly praised Handel series, among much else. The anthology features pieces by J.C. Bach, John Blow, Jeremiah Clarke, Thomas Arne, and many more.

CHAN 0814

TO BE RELEASED IN AUGUST



Atterberg Orchestral Works, Vol. 5

Soloists / Gothenburg Symphony
Chorus and Orchestra
Neeme Järvi

Recorded on SACD, this eagerly awaited fifth volume features two late, again rarely performed symphonies, No. 7 and Atterberg's last, No. 9, setting and old Icelandic prophesy of the end of the world.

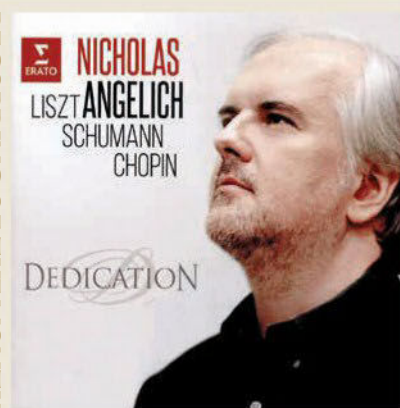
CHSA 5166

GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



'DEDICATION'

Piano Works by Liszt, Schumann and Chopin
Nicholas Angelich *pf*
Erato
► **PATRICK RUCKER'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 28**

Both as soloist and with colleagues, Nicholas Angelich has been building up a richly rewarding discography: it continues here, including a compelling exploration of Liszt's huge Sonata.

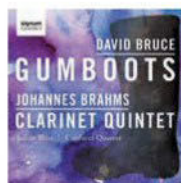


NØRGÅRD

Symphonies Nos 2 & 6
Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds
Dacapo

Both this and the disc of Nos 4 and 5 from the same forces are well worth hearing this month; here, in Nos 2 and 6, we really encounter some fabulous music-making.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 37**

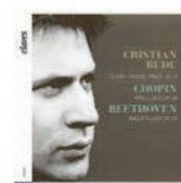


BRAHMS Clarinet Quintet

BRUCE
Gumboots
Julian Bliss *cl*
Carducci Quartet
Signum

Julian Bliss is alert and alive to the power of dance in an engaging new work for clarinet; he and the Carducci Quartet are equally united in the Brahms.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 50**

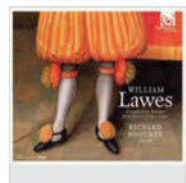


CHOPIN Preludes BEETHOVEN Bagatelles

Cristian Budu *pf*
Claves
In both the Chopin Preludes and the

Beethoven Op 33 Bagatelles, Cristian Budu – a winner of the Clara Haskil competition – proves himself a master of the miniature in an impressive debut disc.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



LAWES Complete
Music for Solo Lyra Viol
Richard Boothby *lyra viol*
Harmonia Mundi
A beautifully played

programme of solo lyra viol music from Richard Boothby, one of today's leading performers of the instrument and its repertoire, makes for a recital of real intimacy.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



DUFAY

'Les Messes à teneur'
Cut Circle / Jesse Rodin
Musique en Wallonie
Some very fine performances of these

significant works from Dufay's last two decades: eight singers, all on impeccable form, make for a lively, intimate and focused experience.

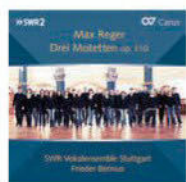
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



HARVEY Choral Works
Choir of St John's College, Cambridge / Andrew Nethsingha
St John's/Signum
St John's, Cambridge

– a choral institution with a proud recording heritage – launch their new label with this superbly prepared and performed disc of Jonathan Harvey works.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**



REGER Drei Motetten
SWR Vocal Ensemble, Stuttgart / Frieder Bernius
Carus

Reger advocates are determined to use the composer's anniversary year to highlight the diversity and beauty of his music; this disc is a superb contribution to that end.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



SCHUBERT Lieder

Benjamin Appl *ten*
Graham Johnson *pf*
Wigmore Hall Live
A praised debut on

Champs Hill, now signed to Sony – but in between comes this impressive Wigmore Hall recital, marking out Benjamin Appl as a baritone thoroughly worth watching.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 80**

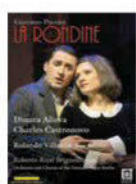


A SCARLATTI

La gloria di Primavera
Sols; Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra / Nicholas McGegan
Philharmonia Baroque

Nicholas McGegan is an excellent guide to this paean on a prince's birth; his players and singers are excellent throughout this work by the elder Scarlatti.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 92**



DVD/BLU-RAY

PUCCINI La rondine
Sols incl Alieva & Castronovo;
Deutsche Oper Berlin / Roberto Rizzi Brignoli
Delos

One of Puccini's less celebrated operas, *La rondine* is here given a stylish production – directed by tenor Rolando Villazón no less – to try to win over the work's critics.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 92**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE NIELSEN. MAHLER

Symphonies **Barbirolli**
Barbirolli Society
Some 'truly remarkable music-making', as critic

Rob Cowan puts it in Replay, from Barbirolli in Mahler and Nielsen.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 96**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD



Artist of the Year nominees: Jonas Kauffmann, Alina Ibragimova, Janine Jansen, Daniil Trifonov

Who do you think should win Gramophone's Artist of the Year Award?

Our critics have been spending the last two months listening to the 72 recordings that form the shortlist for the 2016 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards; this will result in the 12 category winners and ultimately the Recording of the Year. Now it's your turn to join the voting!

Each year we ask our readers and visitors to our website to vote for our new Artist of the Year and this year we've another 10 musicians for you to consider. We've drawn up a shortlist of artists who, we feel, have made a particularly strong impression this past year, and whose contribution – particularly as represented on recordings – has been exceptional.

Two conductors feature on the list: Sir Antonio Pappano makes three appearances in the Awards shortlist – as conductor of the Warner Classics set of Verdi's *Aida*, as concerto partner for Janine Jansen on her fine Decca coupling of Bartók and Brahms, and as pianist for the Erato set, 'Joyce and Tony', a live recital with Joyce DiDonato from London's Wigmore Hall. Andris Nelsons, newly re-signed by DG (see right), and now installed in Boston, impressed with a very fine Shostakovich Symphony No 10: he's clearly a conductor to follow.

A couple of singers, both of whom feature on that Pappano-led *Aida*, have been garnering strong reviews – the tenor of the moment, Jonas Kaufmann (who also gave us a Puccini recital for Sony Classical) and Anja Harteros, better known for live appearances but a thrilling soprano contributor to quite a number of fine recordings too.

It's a Golden Age for pianists at the moment when you consider artists such as Daniil Trifonov (his magnificent Rachmaninov programme for DG is shortlisted this year), Yevgeny Sudbin (whose BIS discography gets bigger and better by the year – look out for his recent Scarlatti collection, our Recording of the Month in April) and Igor Levit (whose discs for Sony Classical have put him in a class of his own from the very first release; his latest, imaginative and challenging trio of Bach, Beethoven and Rzewski is a strong contender in the Instrumental category).

And then there's the violinists. Janine Jansen, already mentioned; Vilde Frang, whose Britten and Korngold coupling for Warner Classics made quite an impact recently, and Alina Ibragimova, such a hit at last year's BBC Proms and whose Ysaÿe sonatas for Hyperion was a winner. For more information about voting, visit gramophone.co.uk.

Andris Nelsons signs exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon

Andris Nelsons, Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and MD-designate of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, has signed an exclusive recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon.

Nelsons will continue his series of live Shostakovich recordings with the BSO (their account of the Tenth Symphony was our Recording of the Month in August 2015). The second instalment in the live Shostakovich series, featuring Symphonies Nos 5, 8 and 9 will be

Rouvali to be Chief Conductor of Gothenburg Symphony

Santtu-Matias Rouvali has been appointed Chief Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony, a role he will assume at the start of the 2017/18 season. He follows in the footsteps of Neeme Järvi (1982-2004), Mario Venzago (2004-7) and Gustavo Dudamel (2007-12) at the helm of the orchestra.

Rouvali will lead the orchestra in two concerts in the coming season, including a performance of Brahms's First Piano Concerto with Marc-André Hamelin in September, but his inaugural season as Principal Conductor will include a tour of the Scandinavian capitals with pianist Hélène Grimaud, followed by a European tour in the 2018-19 season.

Decca Classics signs 16-year-old recorder player Lucie Horsch

Decca Classics has signed a 16-year-old recorder player – Lucie Horsch – the first recorder player to be signed to the label. The Dutch musician's debut album will be released on October 7 and will feature four Vivaldi concertos – including *La notte* and *La tempesta di mare* – and the transcribed arias 'Cum Dederit' from Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominus* and 'Vedro con mio diletto' from the opera *Giustino*.

Decca indicated that they hope the signing will both promote the instrument and also engage the large number of children who encounter it through music lessons at school.

From a musical family (her father is principal cellist of the Royal

reviewed in the next issue. Nelsons will also record Bruckner's symphonies with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and he will embark on a traversal of Beethoven's symphonies with the Vienna Philharmonic. Of the announcement, Nelsons said: 'These revelatory works by the genius composers of Shostakovich, Bruckner and Beethoven will be the focus for my upcoming recordings with three of the world's greatest orchestras. I could not be happier – it is both a dream and an honour.'

Clemens Trautmann, President of DG, said: 'The recordings we make together will document a truly outstanding maestro in a series of defining works.'



Lucie Horsch: recorder recordings for Decca

Concertgebouw Orchestra), Horsch represented Holland in the Eurovision Young Musician Contest in 2014, and last year won the Concertgebouw Young Talent Award.

Baritone Benjamin Appl signs contract with Sony Classical

Sony Classical has signed the young German baritone Benjamin Appl. A former BBC New Generation Artist and a Rising Star of the European Concert Hall Organisation (ECHO), he was the last private pupil of the great German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Appl's first recording, containing Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, was released by Champs Hill and his new recording of Schubert Lieder for Wigmore Hall Live is an Editor's Choice in the current issue (see page 80). The new Sony Classical contract will see a first release early in 2017 and will be a programme of songs by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Grieg and a number of English composers.

The Met names Yannick Nézet-Séguin as its next Music Director

Yannick Nézet-Séguin has just been named as the new Music Director of the Metropolitan Opera, New York. The Canadian conductor will take up the post in the 2020/21 season, and take on the title of Music Director Designate from the 2017/18 season during which he will conduct his first Wagner opera with the company, a revival of *Der fliegende Holländer*.

The Metropolitan Opera is one of the world's most prestigious opera houses, and Nézet-Séguin's appointment to it reinforces his status as one of his generation's most significant conductors.

He will hold the post in tandem with his music directorship of the Philadelphia Orchestra, which has today also announced an extension of his contract through to the 2025/6 season. Meanwhile, he will remain Principal Conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic until the end of the 2017/18 season.

Nézet-Séguin describes the Met post as 'fulfilling a lifelong dream', adding that 'I am truly honoured and humbled to succeed the legendary James Levine as leader of what I believe is the greatest opera company in the world.'

Of the Philadelphia Orchestra extension, he said 'I now embrace with great joy and eagerness the chance to deepen my connection with this sensationally musical city and to share the music-making, both in the concert hall and the wider community, for at least a further decade – I have so many ideas!'

He signed off his statement: 'I am the luckiest MD on earth today.'



Yannick Nézet-Séguin: New York bound

GRAMOPHONE Online

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PODCASTS

James Jolly speaks to Malcolm Martineau about his recording of the first volume in a projected cycle of Fauré's complete songs for Signum Classics alongside a number of the UK's finest singers, including Ann Murray, Iestyn Davies, Ben Johnson and Janis Kelly.

THE 50 GREATEST MOZART RECORDINGS

Mozart's music has inspired every generation of musicians for the last 250 years. In this expansive new article, we have gathered complete reviews of 50 of the finest recordings of Mozart's music – *Gramophone* Award-winning albums, Recordings of the Month and Editor's Choice discs, from Dennis Brain and George Szell to Arabella Steinbacher and the Jussen brothers. Every recording is outstanding and life-enhancing. Visit the *Gramophone* website to start exploring.



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*Standing tall:
the violinist
out to change
the world*

Nicola Benedetti has come a long way since winning BBC Young Musician of the Year but she's still breaking down barriers, both in the repertoire she's recording and in her education work, finds Charlotte Gardner



Surely it's a testament to the extraordinary career that Nicola Benedetti has built up in the 12 years since winning the BBC Young Musician competition at 16 that my inbuilt 'PR puff' alarm didn't so much as flicker when I read the part in her biographical notes that claimed her to be 'one of the most influential classical artists of her day'. Even if my preparation for this interview hadn't included features in *Woman and Home* and *Stylist* alongside the usual broadsheet pieces and classical-music magazines, there was the rest. In 2013 – when she won Best Female Artist at the Classic Brits for the second consecutive year – her refusal to voice an opinion on the Scottish referendum became national news. Then, in 2015, her 'Homecoming: A Scottish Fantasy' recording made her the first British violinist to enter the UK Top 20

Albums Chart since Vanessa Mae in 1995. Add to all that her high-profile advocacy of education schemes such as the BBC's Ten Pieces, as well as those glamorous looks which ensure regular photo opportunities, and her universal reach and consequent influence is indisputable. In fact, the very circumstances of our interview are a case in point – the only suitably sized gap in her schedule turns out to be her lunch break after a photoshoot for a high-end fashion title.

And so it comes to pass that this interview with one of classical music's glossiest stars takes place in possibly the least glossy venue I've ever interviewed someone in: a concrete-walled holding room-cum-corridor in a Hackney studio, where we're perched on benches and hunched over a table in the corner. Benedetti, only

recently back in her own clothes, is chilled to the bone, and there are no notable windows through which the early-March sunshine can permeate and warm things up. Still, mindful of the problematic combination of dictaphones and noisy eateries, she has magnanimously turned down my offers to conduct the interview in the warmer cafe downstairs, and has instead opted for cloaking her PA's woollen overcoat over her own leather jacket. So there we sit, Benedetti dressed to face a blizzard, mirthfully discussing the absurdities inherent with photoshoots ('Do exactly these 200 things but please relax...'). Later, the comedic roughing-it vibe will crescendo upon the arrival of our pre-packed salads when we attempt to spear unwilling leaves with our flimsy plastic forks.

But Benedetti is a woman who cheerfully and professionally gets on with whatever's on her plate, metaphorically or otherwise, and there's never a hint that she isn't both happy to have done the shoot, and pleased to be talking to me. It no doubt helps that she cares deeply about the new recording we're discussing, of concertos by Shostakovich (No 1) and Glazunov, both with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Kirill Karabits.

'The idea of combining the Glazunov with the Shostakovich partly arose because I found it interesting that, in a short space of time, the political and social environment could change the classical expression of a country so drastically,' she begins. 'That's not to say that, in parallel with Shostakovich, there weren't composers whose music was more in line with Glazunov's style, but it's the fact that Shostakovich was a pupil of Glazunov and yet chose such drastic departures from that style that's interesting; you put the two concertos next to each other and it's as though you've travelled in time *and* space, they're so far away from one another. So it's a CD of two halves. I'm not trying to draw similarities between the two pieces at all.'

Benedetti's relationship with the Glazunov dates back to shortly after BBC Young Musician, when she performed it with

the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. 'It's a very useful piece,' she comments. 'It's very, "Let me show you this, let me show you that". It's written as a single movement but there's a very distinct, youthful-sounding post-cadenza last movement, and his melodic capacity is just phenomenal.'

Then, although the Shostakovich has entered her repertoire only in recent years, her relationship with it is deep and longstanding. 'I grew up with the piece, in terms of listening to it,' she explains. 'My violin teacher at the Yehudi Menuhin School came from the David Oistrakh lineage and counted herself very much as a part of that culture, and when she'd have students over to her home she would play us old videos and recordings of him, and also of Gidon Kremer and his first wife, Tatiana Grindenko, who is a fantastic violinist

that very few people know of. So, that Russian school of playing grew to be this formidable, almost untouchable image in my mind. I definitely had a good few years of obsession over the live recordings of Oistrakh playing the Shostakovich First Violin Concerto. The concerto in itself is enormous in scale and length, and in the relentless power of every single movement, but then you add to it Oistrakh's sound; he can take such stark, bleak, hopeless, pain-ridden music and apply such warmth and beauty to it, and end up in a place that allows you to deal with the beauty and the pain all at once. Obviously I wasn't articulating any of that when I got to know his recordings, but these elements translated the piece to me in a very powerful way.'

Just as powerful was her experience of learning it. 'The biggest challenge with a piece this difficult, long and emotionally demanding is being consistent and relentless,' she reflects. 'There is no let-up, and that has to go into the work that you put in, otherwise it's never going to be there in performance; the hope is that you can translate that for the audience, and thus strengthen their tie to it. I see my role onstage

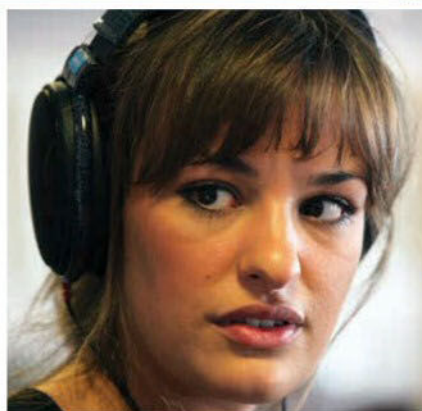


'Being idealistic is important because you have a very clear, uncompromising vision, but unless you know how to manipulate the system, you won't get as far'

– Nicola Benedetti



Close rapport: Benedetti and Kirill Karabits during sessions for the new recording



not as being able to tick the self-satisfied “I nailed that” box, but as having succeeded in pouring myself into telling the story.’

Happily, that was exactly what Benedetti felt happened in the recording sessions. ‘We did the two concertos in different

months, and looking back at the sessions I feel I was in two different worlds,’ she remembers. ‘Throughout the whole of the Shostakovich, it’s as though there’s a tension in your stomach and in your body. Then the opposite is true of the Glazunov, and with that concerto I think I went in with the right attitude and managed to

sustain it across the two sessions. I was just dancing all the time; not literally, but there shouldn’t be tension.’

Her longstanding relationship with Karabits and the Bournemouth musicians also played a part. ‘I just love them, basically,’ she says with warmth. ‘We’ve done a lot of concerts, and we also did the “Silver Violin” recording together. Kirill is someone who has the courage not to try to land on an absolute vertical point, whether that’s deciding if we should be going faster or slower, or whether to give a longer up-beat; he is happy to stay in a very open state. He is also very aware of the soloist, which for the Shostakovich is particularly important because you can’t possibly detail all the things that you’re doing when you’re interpreting it together. So there’s a reliance on trust, intuition and sensing each other. We don’t talk that much in sessions but we’re always challenging each other in this unspoken way. And again, between him and the orchestra, very little has to be said because they know and trust him so implicitly. It’s just a well-oiled combination of people.’

The moment seems ripe, having discussed the recording as a self-contained musical entity, to place it within the wider context of Benedetti’s discography to date. While her 2005 debut disc featured Szymanowski’s Violin Concerto No 1, the work with which she won BBC Young Musician,

it was balanced by bonbon-esque shorts, and since then it's been clear that wide marketability has governed the decision-making, particularly regarding the last three recordings: 'Homecoming' (2014) presented Bruch's four-movement *Scottish Fantasy* alongside arrangements of traditional Scottish songs such as 'My love is like a red, red rose'; 'My First Decade' (2013) was a multi-track compilation including Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel* and Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*; and 'The Silver Violin' (2012) tucked Korngold's Violin Concerto safely into the middle of a programme of popular shorts including the film themes to *Schindler's List* and *Ladies in Lavender*. So, I venture, does this album mark a change of direction?

Benedetti sighs and thinks. 'I'm very aware that it will look like that,' she acknowledges slowly. 'Especially the fact that there were three in a row. Those projects were a case of "a time and a place", but in reality recordings like that do not represent what I do for 99 per cent of the year, and that was becoming more and more of an issue for me. So, nobody could have changed my mind about not just this recording but about what the next five years will look like for me.'

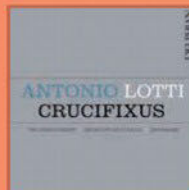
And what *will* they look like? 'It will just be a truer documentation of what I spend most of my energy on,' she states simply, 'which is standard concertos, pieces that aren't arrangements or cross-genre. I mean, I'm really proud of "The Silver Violin" in particular. I really enjoyed that venture. But when have I ever actually played *Schindler's List* or *Por una cabeza*? Never!' She laughs.

'With Kirill Karabits, there's a reliance on trust, intuition and sensing each other. We don't talk that much in sessions but we're always challenging each other in this unspoken way'

Was this new recording a natural next step from Decca's point of view? 'Not really,' she responds carefully. 'It's never quite so straightforward because they have to sell records, and who knows how this one will do.' She continues: 'I would say that the biggest challenge I've found, without anything else in my life coming anywhere close, is with my record company, regarding the juxtaposition of my natural inclinations and what someone else would like me to do.' She picks her words with thought. 'Now, let me say from the get-go that I can't say enough how grateful I am to be recording with Decca; it's an enormous privilege. But there comes a point where...' She pauses. 'Let me put this right; there was a fair bit of encouragement down the "Let's just get out and get working" route when I was only 17 and 18 and just starting out with DG, and the thing is that it's a lot of people who don't really know what an individual's limitations are, including me. So, everybody's discovering for the first time, and in fact the amount of unknowns is what's so scintillating and fascinating about the start of somebody's career. And sometimes you will get a very small group of people who are thrust into the absolute top tier of opportunities and they are ready for it. Whereas I had a very bumpy ride in that in some ways I was right, and in some ways I was wrong, or at least I wasn't ready, in terms of how much repertoire I had, the amount of time I needed to prepare for concerts, and not taking enough of that time. So overall, it has been just been many stages of me trying to regain control of this thing that was kind of running off in a certain direction. And yes, it inspires a lot of self-criticism but also self-evaluation.'

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALEXANDER VAN INGEN/DECCA

DELPHIAN



DCD34182



Record Review
Disc of the Week

Antonio Lotti: Crucifixus

The Syred Consort, Orchestra of St Paul's/Ben Palmer

It is not widely known that Antonio Lotti's famous eight-part setting of the 'Crucifixus' is in fact drawn from a complete Credo setting, itself part of the *Missa Sancti Christophori* that receives its first recording here. Much of Lotti's music was written for the Basilica of San Marco in Venice at a time when expense and extravagance were not spared, and it is at the cutting edge of the *galant* style that prefigured the Classical era. Rhythmic shock and awe, masterful variety, incessant invention and outrageous, luscious harmonies make this music over-ripe for revival.

'propelled with purpose and vitality ... There's an unyielding quest to uncover the imagery and sensibility of Lotti's almost cinematic perspectives with graphic immediacy'

— Gramophone, May 2016



DCD34174

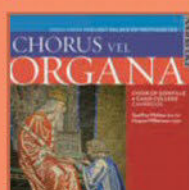
Viri Galilaei: Favourite Anthems from Merton

Choir of Merton College, Oxford/Benjamin Nicholas & Peter Phillips

The choir's fifth Delphian recording in five years again showcases the talents of its joint directors, with Peter Phillips' love of polyphony complemented by Benjamin Nicholas's flair and commitment in some of the twentieth century's major choral works. Bookending these 'favourites' are Patrick Gowers' now iconic Ascension Day anthem *Viri Galilaei* and Jonathan Dove's newly minted *Te Deum*, commissioned by Merton College as part of the Merton Choirbook – the largest series of commissions of its kind in modern times, created in celebration of the College's 750th anniversary.

'captivating ... deliciously expansive ... The choir's singing is notable for its clarity, and [Nicholas and Phillips] bring to these performances a warm-hearted fondness which is as indefinable as it is apparent'

— Gramophone, April 2016



DCD34158

Chorus vel Organa: Music from the lost Palace of Westminster

Magnus Williamson *organ*; Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge/Geoffrey Webber

The modern Houses of Parliament conceal a lost royal foundation: the chapel of St Stephen, begun by Edward I and raised into a college by his grandson Edward III. This recording reflects the musical life of the college in its final years under Henry VIII, and reconstructs both the wide range of singing practices in the great chapels and cathedrals and the hitherto largely unexplored place of organ music in the pre-Reformation period, revealed here through the important scholarly and practical work of Magnus Williamson.

The repertoire chosen reflects the chapel's dedication to St Stephen, and the disc also features three items from the Caius Choirbook – a handsomely illuminated manuscript, commissioned by a canon at St Stephen's, which now resides in Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge.

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Ambassador: Benedetti performs with 400 students from the Music in Secondary Schools Trust at the Barbican in May 2015

'The more you dig regarding the potential impact of music in education, the more absolutely uncompromising you become'

Benedetti talks with enthusiasm about how she's just done three weeks of concerts all over Europe with her long-term recital partner, the pianist Alexei Grynyuk. Although her biography states that concerto performances are 'at the heart of her career', the artistic pleasure she is taking from this recital tour is written all over her face. The pair also play regularly as a trio with Benedetti's partner, the cellist



Joy: Benedetti's trio, with pianist Alexei Grynyuk and cellist Leonard Elschenbroich

Leonard Elschenbroich, and it's within this close musical unit that some interesting collaborations with composers have taken place. For instance, in 2013 Arlene Sierra wrote her much-admired second piano trio, *Butterflies Remember a Mountain*, for them, and in 2015 Mark-Anthony Turnage wrote *Duetti d'amore* for Benedetti and Elschenbroich. I ask whether a new focus on chamber music is on the cards.

'I never had massively positive experiences of going to festivals, lumping in with other musicians and putting pieces together at the last minute,' she muses. 'I don't know if I was just unlucky, but that's not something I do much of now, out of choice.'

However, the trio with Leonard and Alexei is going so well, the recitals I do with Alexei are such a fulfilling experience, and then a few times a year we expand that out into piano quartets and quintets and the like. So I wouldn't say I'm moving in that direction, but it's a very important part of what I do.'

Then there's Benedetti's education work. Tot up the time she devotes to her ambassadorship of the BBC's Ten Pieces scheme, being a Board Member of Sistema Scotland (and a 'Musical Big Sister' of its 'Big Noise' orchestral programme), and running her own masterclass and workshop programme (The Benedetti Sessions), and it comes to around six weeks annually.

She laughs when I ask if this was always part of the game plan. 'I don't know, which I think means that it was never a conscious decision,' she quips, 'but it was very, very natural. If I wasn't a violinist I would be an activist of some kind, and of course the more you dig with regards to what the impact of music in education could be, the more indignant, absolutely uncompromising and committed you become about it.'

And Benedetti is all those things as we unpack the issues. 'It's not okay for a pop song with really inappropriate lyrics to take the place of a piece by Beethoven in a class of 12-year-olds,' she states, 'and I think we have to be uncompromising in that message and not fall into the trap of having to be popular with kids all the time. Education is supposed to be adults who know better saying, "Here is what we've decided you need".'

So, what to do? 'One fundamental thing is that every generation does and should keep fighting the same battles,' she emphasises. 'We must not be discouraged by what we see not happening, because there are thousands of people making things happen and I meet them all the time. I think that much, much more celebration of all the good things that people are doing would go a long way.'

As for her own role, she first outlines her immediate-term strategy. 'There's a really long list of people I've collaborated with on different projects,' she explains, 'and recently I've felt that everything would be better served if I was trying to be a little more of an unbiased entity. So, I'm now trying more to shine a light on as many people's work as possible, to help them join hands with each other. There's also just simply getting into the classroom and doing teaching, which I do regularly, and in

the next year or two I'm trying to focus on the time spent not just with the students but with the teachers.'

Then there's the long-term plan. 'Probably somewhere in my mind I'm giving myself another two, maybe three years of continuing to stay in this sort of open position,' she suggests. 'Then I think it will be time for me to look at all the knowledge and connections I've gathered and make a much more formal, UK-focused attempt to bring about specific change.'

Whatever change it is that she'll be aiming for, Benedetti is reassuringly astute about what she'll be up against. 'Take Jamie Oliver with his food campaigns,' she points out. 'You see the amount of compromising he very quickly gets into having to do when trying to get the government to pass a law, and it's opened up my eyes to how savvy you have to be in that world to be effective. Of course, being idealistic is important because you have a very clear uncompromising vision, but unless you know how to manipulate a system as complicated as that, you won't get as far.'

In the meantime, Benedetti's performance schedule is giving her more than enough to think about. In July she performs the US premiere of the violin concerto Wynton Marsalis wrote for her in 2014, at the Ravinia Festival with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Cristian Măcelaru. She and Măcelaru then take it to the Hollywood Bowl with the LA Philharmonic, and the autumn brings further performances of the work with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington (Christoph Eschenbach), Leipzig Gewandhaus (Wayne Marshall) and the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, where she'll reunite with James Gaffigan who conducted the work's world premiere in London in 2015. Also in the autumn, on September 23, she performs both Szymanowski concertos at the Southbank Centre with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski. This coincides with an all-Szymanowski disc featuring the Second Violin Concerto performed with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Peter Oundjian, plus violin and piano works recorded with Alexei Grynyuk. So, no more bonbons.

'I love and am moved by music more than ever, my enjoyment of playing surpasses what it ever was – everything other than that is smoke and mirrors anyway'

Ask Benedetti about the future though, and it's a more general state she instinctively remarks upon. 'What I'm most confident about is that I love and am moved by music more than I ever was, that my enjoyment of playing surpasses what it ever was, and that my confidence of feeling and purpose in performance is more assured than it ever was,' she says. 'Everything other than that is kind of smoke and mirrors anyway.'

And that would have been the point at which to finish, only I can't resist asking her for a favourite career moment to date, and her answer sums up our conversation perfectly. 'Actually right now I would pick a concert I did this month in Utrecht,' she smiles. 'I'd not slept the night before, it was the last time Alexei and I were playing the *Kreutzer* Sonata on the tour, and I just heard and saw so much that had previously been kind of hiding; it was like a new state of mind and body. So, it was a bit of a breakthrough moment for me, and I think I'll remember it for the rest of my life.'

Nicola Benedetti's new Shostakovich and Glazunov recording will be reviewed in the next issue of *Gramophone*

PHOTOGRAPHY: BENJAMIN EALOVEGA, MARK MCNULTY



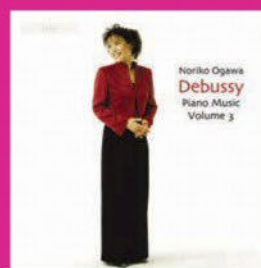
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REGER

THE ORGAN KING

The greatest German organ composer since Bach, Max Reger blazed a trail for modernism – yet his music remains neglected. A century after his death, Gavin Dixon argues for recognition of his entire output, including the chamber and orchestral works

Reger should, in my opinion, be played often, first of all because he was prolific, and second because he is dead and we don't have any clear ideas about him yet. (I consider him a genius).' Even six years after Max Reger's death, Arnold Schoenberg was still getting to grips with his music. Schoenberg was one of the composer's most ardent champions, but despite his best efforts, and those of Henry Wood, Adolf Busch, Rudolf Serkin and many others, Reger has since become a peripheral figure. It's a puzzling fate: Reger was a distinctive and influential voice in times of change, the sort of composer that history usually celebrates. He is acknowledged as the greatest German organ composer since Bach, the most sophisticated

'The connection to Bach is obvious in Reger's Cello Suites... You might call them "neo-classical", but in a naughty way – as naughty as Reger could ever be' – Alban Gerhardt, cellist

contrapuntalist of his day, and a key figure in the genesis of modernism and neo-classicism.

A passing acquaintance with Brahms is a good route into Reger's music. Many of Reger's chamber works were written in response to Brahms. His first two clarinet sonatas, Op 49, were composed within three weeks of Reger's introduction to Brahms's Clarinet Sonata No 1 in 1900. And it is no coincidence that Reger also wrote an expansive string sextet and a mellifluous clarinet quintet. Like Brahms, Reger wrote masterfully for every instrument he employed. As cellist Alban Gerhardt, one of Reger's most celebrated interpreters, says of the four cello sonatas: 'He seems to know about that singing quality of the cello, as did Brahms. His relation to Brahms is obvious in the great melodic writing for the instrument.' But as viola player Tabea Zimmermann, another acclaimed Reger interpreter, points out, Reger always has a distinctive voice: 'I see Reger's writing as his own, bringing elements of Brahms's structural thinking to new expressions.'

Reger's music feels freer than Brahms. Melodic ideas are developed intensely, but are rarely constricted by traditional harmonic thinking. At a time when tonal harmony was being stretched to breaking point, Reger was pulling harder than most. His harmonies are usually determined by the melodies,

and Reger is happy to move continually between distant chords, using his sweeping lyrical lines to maintain the logic and flow.

Harmonic freedom is often balanced by a strict adherence to traditional forms. Reger stood out among his contemporaries for his use of counterpoint, free and dexterous but closely tied to Baroque idioms. That mastery of counterpoint is most apparent in Reger's organ works. The music of Bach is a clear model, especially for his large-scale concert pieces, some of which are truly epic: his *Fantasia and Fugue on B-A-C-H*, Op 46, runs to more than 20 minutes, while his *Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue*, Op 127, approaches a half hour. But they're not all gothic edifices: many of Reger's organ works are small and

intimate, but just as distinctive, such as the 12 Pieces, Op 65, and the Seven Organ Pieces, Op 145.

Reger's most radical music dates from his early career. In the chamber music of the late 1890s we hear increasingly daring harmonic juxtapositions and complex, contrapuntal textures. 'This music is pretty Expressionist,' says Gerhardt. 'It reminds me of the paintings of Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.' The style reached its peak in the Piano Quintet, Op 64 (1901-2), and the Third String Quartet, Op 74 (1903-4). These are challenging but rewarding works, as daring as those of Schoenberg at the time. Take, for example, the first movement of the Third String Quartet, a monumental 20-minute span. Functional tonality is all but abandoned, yet rigorous thematic development and a strict sonata form ensure direction and focus.

In 1901, Reger settled in Munich, planning to establish himself as a pianist and organist, and also hoping to gain recognition as an orchestral composer.

His efforts to compose a symphony were frustrated, and his Sinfonietta of 1904-5 was a high-profile flop, even its title conceding a lack of symphonic argument: at more than 50 minutes it's hardly short. However, in 1907 a new orchestral work found an appreciative audience – a variation set, on a theme by Hiller, Op 100. This, along with the *Mozart Variations*, Op 132, remain among Reger's most popular works, granting him a toe-hold in the orchestral repertoire. Theme-and-variation form proved ideal for Reger, the perfect medium for his complex thematic manipulation and elaborate counterpoint, each set typically culminating in a grand fugue. ('Other people write fugues – I live inside them,' Reger once remarked.) During his Munich years, Reger also composed the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of JS Bach*, Op 81 (his most significant contribution to the solo piano literature), and the two-piano *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Beethoven*, Op 86, now better known in the orchestral version he made in 1915.

A teaching appointment at Leipzig University from 1907 allowed Reger to escape the increasingly acrimonious atmosphere of Munich. (From 1911, he combined this with a conducting position, as director of the Saxe-Meiningen court orchestra.) Reger's two concertos, for violin and piano, date from these years. In both works, Reger seeks to build on the traditions of Beethoven and Brahms, with strong thematic arguments and



PHOTOGRAPHY: MAX REGER INSTITUTE

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Larger than life: caricatures by Wilhelm Thielmann; and (right), Reger's epic Op 127

a symphonic structure based on discourse between soloist and ensemble. The *Largo* second movements of both concertos are based on long, wistful, floating melodies, and each concerto ends with an optimistic and bracing finale. Both are huge works, and have proved controversial for their dense scoring, but, in the case of the Violin Concerto, lighter arrangements – a re-orchestration by Adolf Busch and a version for chamber orchestra by Rudolf Kolisch – have given the music clarity of texture and, with it, a new lease of life.

In 1915, Reger was forced to stand down from his teaching and conducting positions due to ill health, and he retired to Jena, a small city near Leipzig. Reger's constitution had been poor throughout his adult life, a result, it was said, of overindulgence in food, tobacco, Rhineland wines and Bavarian beer. All this, combined with a strenuous workload, contributed to his death at the age of just 43.

In Reger's late music, the tone changes and a new approach emerges – one of clear textures and simpler harmonies. His orchestral works become more openly expressive, as in the atmospheric *Romantic Suite* (after Eichendorff), Op 125, and the dark but deliciously Elgarian *Four Symphonic Poems after Böcklin*, Op 128 – two rare forays into programme music. Counterpoint remains a primary concern, especially in his late chamber works where the debt to Bach is particularly pronounced. This Baroque orientation is most apparent in his series of unaccompanied suites, three each for viola and cello, dating from 1915 – the year before Reger's death. 'The connection to Bach becomes obvious in the Cello Suites,' says Gerhardt, 'especially in the First, in G major, which uses a very similar pattern to Bach's.' Zimmermann points out that Reger follows Bach's solo string-writing in the use of polyphony, both real and implied: 'I personally love the Viola Suites and find them very challenging and demanding,' she says. 'I like to bring out the polyphony – the "old" form and the "espressivo". They're fantastic studies, and all my students have to play them.'

But even here, the relationship between old and new remains complex. As Zimmermann explains, 'I feel a constant tension between the shape and the content, and find it very challenging and helpful to balance these contradictions. One important element for me would be the use of dynamics that go "against" the melodic lines.' Are the suites neo-classical? 'No, because of that constant tension between the shape and the content,' Gerhardt begs to differ: 'You might call them neo-classical, but in a naughty way – as naughty as Reger could ever be, naughty in a very bourgeois way.'

So why the continuing neglect? Zimmermann believes that below-par performances may be to blame, especially given the technical challenges: 'A bad performance can have a very damaging influence on the perception of a composer,' she says. Gerhardt, meanwhile, suspects that Reger might just be too German: 'His music is not appreciated as much as it could be, because he is seen as the prototype of a misanthropic German.'

Even for the Germans he is a bit too Germanic.'

Given that stern, Teutonic image, Reger died at a bad time, midway through the First World War. Anti-German feeling in the English-speaking world as a result of the conflict may well have contributed to his neglect in the following years. His case wasn't helped by the fact that his initial response to the conflict was *A Patriotic Overture*, Op 140, dedicated 'to the German Army'.

Some of the charges against Reger stick, but his huge and varied catalogue includes works to challenge every stereotype. Sprawling? Try the elegant and concise 10 Little Pieces for piano, Op 44. Too dense? Not the Piano Quartet, Op 133, with its nimble, sparkling *Vivace* second movement. Undisciplined? Occasionally, but not in the unaccompanied choral works, such as the Three Choruses, Op 39, the sense of order and focus here inherited directly from Brahms. And, for sheer *joie de vivre*, try the Three Duos for two violins, Op 131*b*. The counterpoint is strict but the spirit is free, the 'old' form meeting 'espressivo' in a perfect Reger combination. **G**

Explore Max Reger's music further via our playlist on page 111

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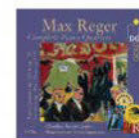
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Alban Gerhardt vc
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Gustavo Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra perform a free concert in Caracas in 2009

Latin America's burgeoning international impact has been felt in literature, cinema, the visual arts, pop music and cuisine over the past half-century, yet the classical music from that region still remains relatively unknown. Ask your average European concert-goer to name some prominent US composers and they'll likely provide a fairly accurate shortlist with little trouble: Gershwin, Copland, Bernstein, certainly; perhaps also Barber, Glass; even Ives and Adams. Ask these same concert-goers for some composers from south of the border: well, there's Villa-Lobos, maybe Ginastera, and, hmm...does Piazzolla count?

A thorough explanation of this imbalance would be book-length at least, but the obvious short answer is that, while the US has wielded enormous economic and political clout for more than a century, the 20-odd countries that make up Latin America have struggled for stability, and have been used by the superpowers as pawns in an often deadly post-Cold War chess game. In reality, musical culture on both continents has developed more or less in tandem. Composers in the 18th and 19th centuries strived to emulate European trends before finding more distinctive, nationalist styles in the early decades of the 20th century. Yet North American composers have achieved an international reach and recognition that none of their southern peers can rival.



Viva Latin America!

With the Proms and the Olympics focusing on Latin America this year, Andrew Farach-Colton explores the vibrancy of the area's music and asks why certain composers aren't better known

For stark evidence of this disparity, consider Heitor Villa-Lobos, arguably the best-known of all Latin American composers. Granted, the Brazilian was an astonishingly prolific figure whose catalogue is bursting with well over 2000 works. Yet today, more than a half-century after his death, only a small fraction of his output is performed regularly or is accessible on recordings, and there's still a significant segment that remains unpublished. Marin Alsop, the American-born music director of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, sums up the situation succinctly: 'We only really know the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Villa-Lobos.' Her colleague Arthur Nestrovski, the orchestra's artistic director and a composer in his own right,

notes that even in Brazil, much of Villa-Lobos's work remains unknown. 'Of course, many people know the *Bachianas Brasileiras* and may also be familiar with the series of *Chôros*, but the symphonies? We are actually in the process of recording his complete symphonies for the first time.' Nestrovski explains that several of the symphonies exist only in error-ridden manuscript copies, which may help to account for the neglect of an obvious 20th-century master. 'And beyond the symphonies,' he adds, 'there are still so many other wonderful works of his that are yearning for our attention.'

Villa-Lobos's Six Preludes and 12 Etudes for guitar are among his most frequently performed and recorded works, which may speak to the relative

'There's nothing genteel about Latin American music. It may be beautiful, sensual or melancholic, but it can also be brutal or painful'

- Gabriela Montero, pianist

success of the Latin American guitar repertoire. Cuban-born Manuel Barrueco, who has been championing Latin American composers from the outset of his career in the 1970s, goes so far as to say that Villa-Lobos could be the greatest composer ever to have written for the guitar. 'It's not just the quality of the compositions, which are absolutely gorgeous, but also the way in which he exploits the instrument,' he says. 'He gets so much sound from the guitar. Moving the left hand in one position up and down the fingerboard, combined with the use of open strings, creates these fantastic harmonies and patterns – sounds that had never been imagined up to that moment. Villa-Lobos had a view of the guitar that was simply unlike anyone's before him.'

The prominence of the guitar in Latin American repertoire reflects an ancestral bond with the Iberian peninsula and, more to the point, an intimate relationship with popular music. 'My view is that the best aspects of Brazilian culture in the past 150 years all have to do with mixture,'

Nestrovski says. 'Whether we're talking about architecture, gastronomy, dance, or music – they're all related to the blending of cultures: Native American, African, European and, more recently, North American. It's a big pot with so many different strata that it's difficult to define exactly what "national" really means. Everything is so mixed.'

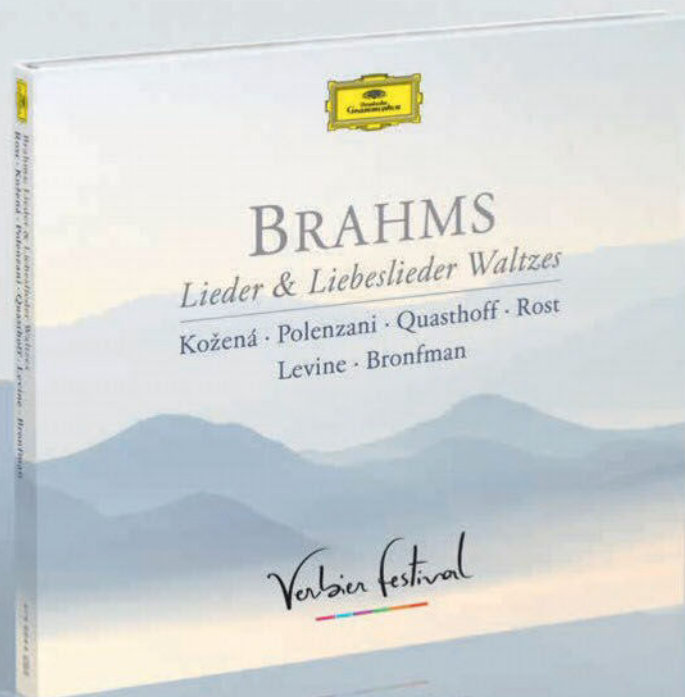
For Alsop, this smudging of the lines separating genres and styles is tremendously exciting. 'I love that period in North American music beginning around the 1920s and '30s when popular and serious music came together. So having the opportunity to work in São Paulo with this rich, blended musical tradition – music that most of us North Americans

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or Europeans have very, very little experience with – has been a true voyage of discovery.’

It’s worth noting, however, that the ethnic make-up of each country in Latin America is different, and this is reflected in markedly distinct musical cultures. The African influence that’s so prevalent in Brazil and Cuba is almost entirely non-existent in Mexico or Argentina, for instance, where composers have forged nationalist styles using folkloric elements.

Alberto Ginastera (whose centenary is being celebrated this year) is, with Villa-Lobos, the other undisputed giant of Latin American music. But although they were near contemporaries and neighbours in a way (Brazil and Argentina share a 1200km-long border), the music of the two composers has very little in common. This was partly a matter of differing personality types. Villa-Lobos never revised, claiming that revision took time away from composition. ‘He wrote and wrote,’ says Gisèle Ben-Dor, the Uruguayan-born conductor. ‘Rivers of music came from him. He wrote in coffee shops – wherever he was. Sometimes he’d put the papers aside and they’d get lost. He was very spontaneous. Ginastera, on the other hand, was very precise. He purposely destroyed some of his music or insisted it never be performed. And he was always looking to Europe. He didn’t want to be classified as an Argentine composer, as a nationalist. He really didn’t.’

Beginning in the late 1950s, Ginastera began to incorporate experimental techniques that were being employed by European modernists, and in 1970 he moved to Switzerland, where he



Gabriela Montero: ‘One can’t ignore what our people have lived through’

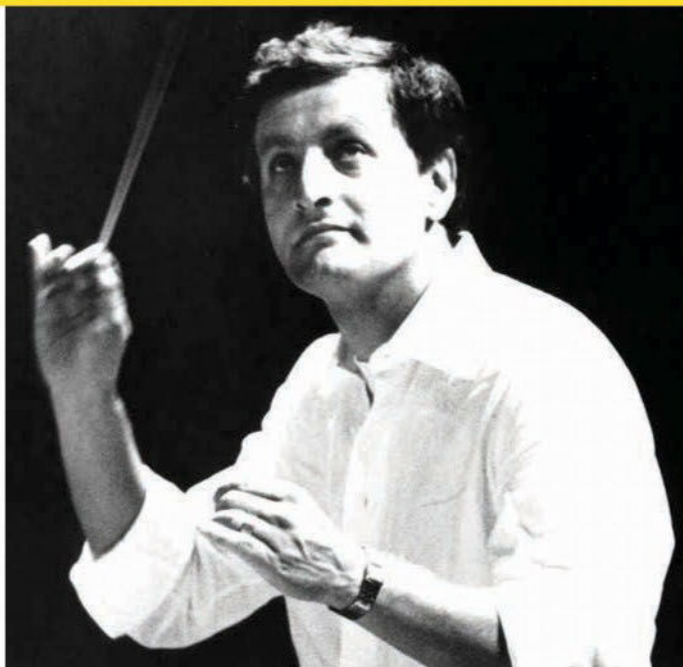
spent his last years. Some of the music from his self-described ‘neo-expressionist’ third period remain challenging for audiences and have perhaps ironically ensured that he is remembered primarily for his early nationalist masterpieces. Yet even in the thorniest examples of his later music, Ginastera never entirely abandons his musical heritage. ‘The incessant rhythms, magical *adagios*, mysterious *prestos* and sad *cantilenas* make Ginastera’s music always captivating,’ says Argentinian pianist Fernando Viani, who surveyed the composer’s

solo keyboard music for Naxos. ‘Ginastera sought to validate the position of a Latin American composer who inherits a conflicted situation: the technique from the world of our colonisers and the musical roots from indigenous people who were oppressed and silenced. The deeper one digs into these roots, the more painful the conflict becomes. Ginastera’s music is always impeccably crafted, yet has a raw power, and this is what draws me to him.’ Viani continues: ‘As one who is himself the grandchild of immigrants, who’s interested in the search for identity, and who wants to believe in “magical realism”, Ginastera’s music truly fits like a glove.’

Beyond Villa-Lobos and Ginastera, which other composers are at the heart of the Latin American repertoire? Saúl Bitrán, first violinist with the intrepid Cuarteto Latinoamericano since its genesis in Mexico in 1982, has his own pantheon. ‘Along with those two, you’d have to include Silvestre Revueltas and Carlos Chávez – both Mexicans – as the composers who pretty much invented the language of Latin American concert music,’ he says.



‘Voyage of discovery’: In São Paulo, Marin Alsop relishes the ‘rich, blended tradition – music that most of us North Americans or Europeans have little experience with’



Eduardo Mata: his 'unflagging advocacy of Latin American music' is widely admired

'Of course, there are others who also should be mentioned: Roque Cordero from Panama, Julián Orbón from Cuba, and Juan Orrego-Salas from Chile. But the core quartet of Villa-Lobos, Ginastera, Revueltas and Chávez cannot be ignored, and all of the composers who have followed them have felt their enormous shadow and had to find their own



Silvestre Revueltas: hard act to follow

way to do something different.'

Arthur Nestrovski mostly agrees with Bitrán's assessment. 'Orbón's music is definitely worth investigating. And I would add another name: Antonio Estévez of Venezuela. He composed at least one masterpiece, the *Cantata Criolla* (1954), which the São Paulo Symphony performed here in Brazil for the first time last year. Scored for tenor and baritone soloists, choir and orchestra with a powerful percussion part, it's a fantastic

mixture of Stravinskian textures with rousing Venezuelan rhythms. It should be played everywhere, really, like *Carmina Burana*. The problem is that there's no published score. We had to find somebody who'd played the work, get a photocopy, speak with the composer's family. It's complicated. I don't think there's ever been a recording.'

Ah, but there *is* a recording, though – from 1992 with Eduardo Mata conducting the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela on Dorian – and it's a knockout in every sense. Nestrovski is absolutely right: Estévez's *Cantata Criolla* should be in the standard repertoire. And here, perhaps, it's proper to pay tribute to Mata, who died in 1995 at the age of 52 when the small airplane he was piloting crashed. Both Bitrán and Ben-Dor, unprompted and in separate interviews, make a point of singling out the effect of the late Mexican conductor's unflagging advocacy of Latin American composers. Bitrán credits Mata with getting the Cuarteto Latinoamericano its recording contract with the Dorian label, which resulted in magnificent and invaluable recordings, made from 1995 to

2001, of Villa-Lobos's 17 string quartets, as well as other vital projects. Ben-Dor puts it simply: 'Mata was a pioneer. We've all benefited enormously from his hard work.'

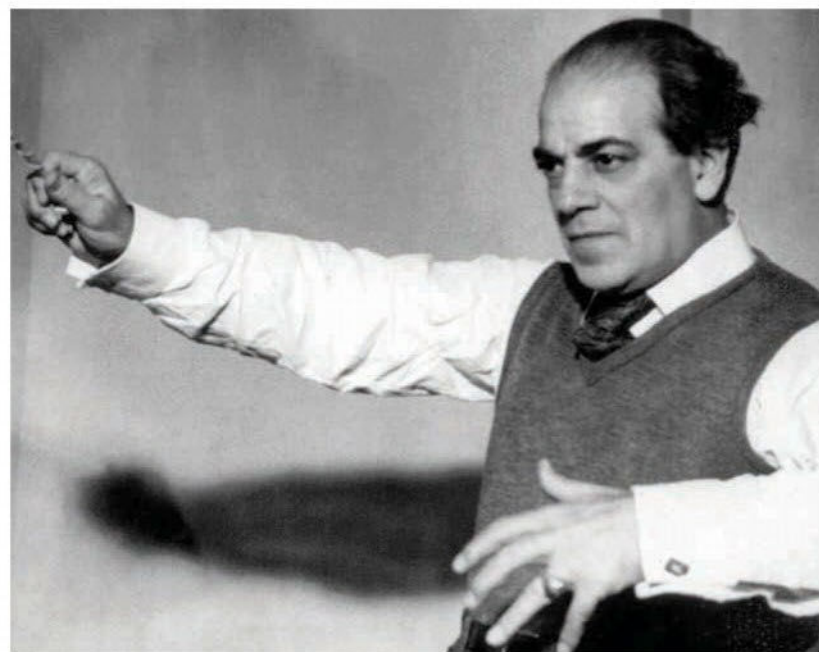
Alsop, Barrueco, Ben-Dor, Bitrán, Nestrovski and Viani are, as Mata was, eager and enthusiastic guides to a large and largely uncharted repertoire, one whose 'core' is continually expanding. Nestrovski suggests that Camargo Guarnieri and Francisco Mignone richly deserve to take their places alongside Villa-Lobos. Listening to Guarnieri's intricately wrought Symphony No 4, *Brasília*, dedicated to Leonard Bernstein, and his sophisticated and delightful (in the Tchaikovskian sense) *Três Danças para orquestra*, or Mignone's boldly coloured 1933 choral ballet *Maracatu de Chico Rei*, it's difficult to fathom why this music is so rarely heard. And then there's Almeida Prado, a student of Messiaen who combined various elements of that French master's technique with Afro-Brazilian rhythms. The São Paulo Symphony recorded a stunning suite of excerpts from Prado's massive *Sinfonia No 2: Dos Orixás* (available to download for free on the orchestra's website) which leave one impatient to hear more.



Chávez: 'invented a new language'

Viani makes a strong case for the music of Luis Gianneo, whom one might describe as an Argentinian Prokofiev, at least in his piano music. Gianneo's evocative post-Impressionist orchestral tone-poem *El tarco en flor* should please those with a fondness for Delius and Bax. And Viani, Barrueco and Ben-Dor all express affection and admiration for the songs, piano miniatures and chamber works of Carlos Guastavino, whose use of folkloric melody creates a simple surface which barely conceals a consistent undercurrent of bittersweet, nostalgic longing.

Venezuelan pianist and composer Gabriela Montero believes that an element of suffering filters through everything Latin Americans say or do. 'This is true of the music, too,' she says.



Villa-Lobos: astonishingly prolific figure whose catalogue contains 2000-odd works

'There's nothing genteel about it. It may be beautiful, sensual or melancholic, but it can also be brutal or painful. It's essentially very different from European classical music.'

'One simply cannot ignore the political context, or the history of what the people have lived through,' she continues. 'I can't separate that out because as a musician, that's what drives me. I view myself as a musical storyteller, and my hope as a composer is to raise awareness – not merely to write music, but to bring to the audience a story that they might otherwise remain ignorant of.'

A renowned improviser, Montero shares an anecdote about a performance she gave in Norway. 'When I play a solo recital, I always devote the second half to improvisations and ask the audience to provide me with the themes. Here, I was asked to create little folksongs about elves and mystical figures in the forests and lakes. It was all so innocent. At one point I laughed and said, "You know, if this was Latin America, every song would be about betrayal or jealousy – something really dark and emotional." It's such a different culture. In Latin America, we see and experience life in a dramatically different way.'

Gabriela Montero plays at the Proms with the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra and Marin Alsop on August 24; Juan Diego Flórez sings at the Last Night on September 10. For details, visit bbc.co.uk/proms

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Experience the sheer variety of Latin American music



'Latin America Live: The Eduardo Mata Sessions'
Simón Bolívar
Symphony Orchestra

of Venezuela / Eduardo Mata
Dorian
A varied selection of Latin American orchestral masterworks, including Estévez's thrilling *Cantata Criolla*. The recordings are of demonstration quality and the Simón Bolívar Orchestra play with verve and élan for the late conductor Eduardo Mata.



Villa-Lobos: String Quartets
Cuarteto
Latinoamericano
Brilliant Classics

These 17 string quartets span Villa-Lobos's entire creative life and reveal a multifaceted and mercurial genius who never seemed to run out of ideas. A labour of love for the Cuarteto Latinoamericano, and vividly recorded by Dorian in the 1990s, this is an essential set.



Ginastera: Piano Music
Fernando Viani *pf*
Naxos
Ginastera was

a purposefully serious composer,

yet Viani finds equal measures of joyful exuberance and expressive intimacy in this compellingly taut recording of the composer's complete piano music.



'Canciones Argentinas'
Bernarda Fink *mez*
Marcos Fink *bar*
Carmen Piazzini *pf*

Harmonia Mundi

Here, a choice selection of Carlos Guastavino's gem-like songs are placed in the larger context of 20th-century Argentinian *canciones*, all sung to the manner born by Bernarda and Marcos Fink. A delectable recital.



Mignone: Maracatu de Chico Rei. Sinfonia Tropical. Festa das Igrejas

São Paulo Symphony Orchestra / John Neschling

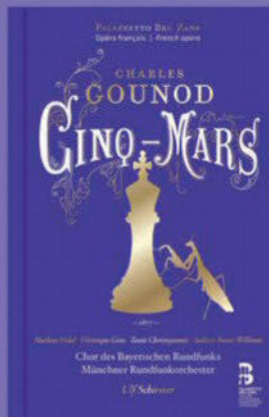
BIS

This triptych of scintillating orchestral showpieces presents Mignone as a Brazilian analogue to Respighi. The exuberant choral ballet *Maracatu de Chico Rei* is a loveable masterpiece in its own right, and the São Paulo Orchestra and Chorus perform it with obvious gusto.

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Under the spell of Chopin

Chopin and his Europe Festival 2016

Almost as soon as Fryderyk Chopin arrived in Paris in October 1831, he started to attend the opera on a daily basis. The long, free-flowing melodic lines of the *bel canto* school famously infected Chopin's musical mind and seeped into this hands, too. Before long, his piano melodies were becoming clear evocations and distillations of the operatic arias he so loved. When Vincenzo Bellini arrived in Paris two years after Chopin, it was no surprise that the two men hit it off. When Chopin lay dying in the same city in October 1849, he asked his friend Delfina Potocka to sing for him. Specifically, to sing an aria by Bellini.

There are delights at every turn in this summer's 'Chopin and his Europe' Festival: 16 days of concerts that celebrate Chopin's Italian connections under the subtitle 'From Italy to Poland – from Mozart to Bellini', and featuring a host of major musical stars.

The 12th Festival again juxtaposes Chopin's music with music by the composers closest to him: Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Bellini and Jírovec. A range of influences on Chopin's music, and – its mirror image – of Chopin's music on other composers, will be explored. In the spotlight will be Chopin's favourite musical genres – opera, song, concerto and chamber music – as well as 'second-hand' forms that were popular during the 19th century: arrangements, paraphrases and variations on the best-known works of the day. Concert-goers will also encounter less familiar, but excellent Polish music (Dobrzyński, Nowowiejski, Żeleński) and bold, risky and provocative transformations of Chopin masterpieces into a different kind of sound. All of this will be conveyed in masterful performances on both modern and historic instruments and in a diverse wealth of performance styles, especially of the music of the festival's patron.

The Polish premiere of Bellini's opera *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* using period instruments is surely a major draw this year. Fabio Biondi might be most discussed in *Gramophone* for his recordings of Baroque music, but his love for Bellini is



'There are delights at every turn in this summer's 'Chopin and his Europe' Festival'

deep and has already yielded strong results on record. He takes charge of the concert performance with his own ensemble, Europa Galante, and a top-drawer cast that includes Vivica Genaux and Valentina Farcas as the star-crossed lovers.

That performance is sure to be one of the highlights of the festival's opening week, and it also encapsulates much of what the 'Chopin and his Europe' Festival has set out to achieve since it was established in 2005. And Biondi isn't alone in his use of period instruments or in his international reputation. There are major interpreters scattered throughout this year's festival, from up-and-coming laureates of the Chopin Competition (playing pianos by Erard, Pleyel and Broadwood as well as Yamaha and Steinway) to established stars including Nelson Goerner, former *Gramophone* Young Artist of the Year Jan Lisiecki and ensembles such as the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century and the European Union Youth Orchestra.

When Bellini died, in 1835, his Requiem Mass was sung to a new, specially written setting by Gaetano Donizetti. The

festival's Italian theme continues with a performance of Donizetti's rare gem from Václav Luks's Collegium 1704 and an intriguing performance of *The Barber of Seville* in a transcription for winds from the Amphion Wind Octet. Even more intriguing, perhaps, is Jean Françaix's orchestration of Chopin's 28 Preludes, revived by Sinfonia Varsovia under Grzegorz Nowak.

Chopin lived in a Europe whose musical imagination was fast expanding. The Festival exists to reflect all of that, and beyond. A strong structural influence was exerted on Chopin by Austro-German music, not least that of his guiding lights Bach and Mozart. The festival's opening concert presents Lortzing's *Overture Der Pole und sein Kind*, based on the Polish national anthem, and Mozart's gregarious Concerto for Two Pianos featuring Katia and Marielle Labèque, followed immediately by Mahler's First Symphony under Vasily Petrenko's baton. The Belcea Quartet's performance of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* comes with a serious pedigree (their recording of the work was a finalist in the 2009 *Gramophone* Awards) and the chance to hear Ian Bostridge and Julius Drake offer context for Chopin's lyricism with songs by Schumann and Brahms is one that shouldn't be missed. But there is so much more to discover besides. Chopin's heart always remained in Warsaw. This August, it should feel more present than ever. **G** Find the Festival programme at chopin.nifc.pl

GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Patrick Rucker salutes the near-perfection achieved by Nicholas Angelich
in a programme linking three pillars of the Romantic piano repertoire



'Dedication'

Chopin Etudes, Op 10 – No 10; No 12,
'Revolutionary' Liszt Piano Sonata, S178
Schumann Kreisleriana, Op 16
Nicholas Angelich *pf*
Erato © 019029 599067-1 (78' • DDD)

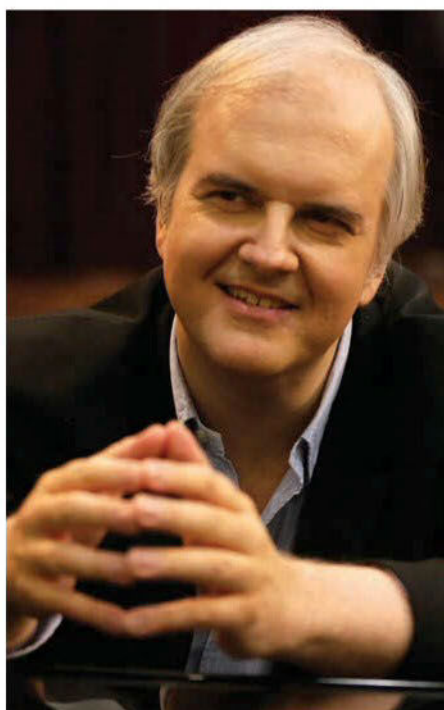
Nicholas Angelich's new release, with its conceptual underpinning of Schumann's work dedicated to Chopin, Chopin's to Liszt and Liszt's to Schumann, reveals him at a new level of artistic accomplishment. Given the distinct personalities and temperaments of the three pillars of Romantic pianism, few pianists play them equally well. Angelich comes very close, here represented in a fully dimensional, life-like sound, as captured by the engineers at Erato.

Of the two Etudes chosen from Chopin's Op 10, Angelich imbues the frolicsome A flat (No 10) with an ardent lyricism that soars with unimpeded joy, without sacrificing anything of its characteristic kinetic buoyancy. The result is arrestingly beautiful. The 'Revolutionary' (No 12) recalls the 'grand manner' of more than a century ago, with a crisply rhythmical, clarion right hand leading the charge over the churning, roiling ebb and flow of the left hand's legato perfection.

An aura of confiding intimacy surrounds this *Kreisleriana*. We are made privy to secrets, touching on troubles and joys, obsessions and aspirations, all conveyed with disarming earnestness and sincerity. Angelich must have lived with this music a long time to inhabit the score so completely. The authentic ring of his rhetorical poise derives from scrupulous attention to Schumann's phrasing and articulation, within a textured soundscape that seems almost limitless in its variety. When the left hand moves in octaves, it is as though the 16ft stop of an organ has been engaged, creating a firm but



This Kreisleriana stands comparison with the most thoughtful and imaginative, Annie Fischer, Argerich and Perahia among them



whispered reinforcement. Schumann's famous 'inner voices' assume myriad guises, here distant echoes of regret, there blossoming spontaneously from emotional necessity.

Angelich's artful conception of the conclusion of No 2 seems to suspend time itself. When Schumann urges the pianist to greater and greater speed, as for instance in the cataclysmic finale of No 3 or the fugato of No 7, Angelich always seems to have reserves at the ready. The landscape outside the window may be a blur but the train remains firmly on the rails. During the recitative that introduces No 4, desolation and hopelessness are evoked to chilling effect. As the cycle concludes, with No 8's crippled figurations skipping beyond earshot, it's a toss-up between relief from the surfeit of emotional intensity and regret that so vivid an engagement has ended. This is a reading that stands comparison with the most thoughtful and imaginative, Annie Fischer, Argerich and Perahia among them.

The Liszt Sonata is brilliant in both concept and execution. Parenthetically it should be noted that octave passages are even faster and more accurate than Horowitz's 1932 account. But dazzling octaves do not a successful B minor Sonata make, and here they are but one feature of a spacious musical topography. The defining architectural elements contributing to this mighty edifice are subtly sculpted phrase shapes, vivid contrasts of texture and articulation, and an unerring sense of dramatic thrust.

Gossamer figurations at 9'20" take flight, shimmering with prismatic colour. Angelich's cunning transition away from the molten rhetorical assertions of the first movement maintains ominous portent, even as its energy dissipates. Arrival at the *Andante sostenuto* could be the first glimpse of another world, heretofore



Nicholas Angelich: magisterial virtuosity in a programme of Schumann dedicated to Chopin, Chopin to Liszt and Liszt to Schumann

unimagined. Its profound quiet and calm are breathtaking in their tranquillity. The fugue begins as a sly insinuation that quickly gathers strength, with keenly honed edges that call to mind the lustrous clarity of quartz crystal prisms bursting randomly from their geological matrix.

One may nitpick, of course. The tricky question of the hierarchy of beats within a measure has special implications for the B minor Sonata's opening statement: should beats two and four receive identical emphasis? And what of trills in an *espressivo* context? Does a long, uniformly fast trill, like a whirligig held out the window of a fast-moving automobile, really fit the bill?

But these questions seem quibbles in the face of so compelling a reading. Angelich's magisterial virtuosity is uniquely

contemporary, even as his imaginative grasp easily encompasses a persuasive vision of the 19th-century ethos. One could speculate that his stance of heroic nobility is but a short step from what the declamations of Talma and Bocage might have been on the stage of the Comédie-Française, his poignant lyricism not far from the mercurial pathos of Bernhardt. Less intellectual than Cortot or Brendel and perhaps closest in sensibility to Richter, Angelich's rhetorical authority and architectural cohesion place him alongside Garrick Ohlsson and Marc-André Hamelin, whose Liszt Sonatas were the most compelling to emerge during the 2011 centennial year. **G**

Liszt Piano Sonata – selected comparisons:

Hamelin (5/11) (HYPE) CDA67760

Ohlsson (8/11) (BRID) BRIDGE9337

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Harriet Smith on Moszkowski and Schulz-Evler on Hyperion:

'Add an exuberant virtuosity and a penchant for spinning a good tune, and you have a very worthwhile addition' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 36**



David Gutman listens to Masaaki Suzuki tackle Stravinsky:

'In Apollo he delights in refreshing Stravinsky's unexpected chords with a distinctly scrunchy edge' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 43**

Beethoven • Mozart • Schumann

'Equal'

Beethoven Violin Concerto, Op 61

Mozart Quintet, K452 (arr Françaix)

Schumann Phantasie, Op 131

CHAARTS Chamber Artists / Sebastian Bohren *vn*

RCA Red Seal © 88985 31717-2 (78' • DDD)



It may seem brave (or perhaps foolhardy) for a relatively new ensemble and a

youngish soloist/director – Sebastian Bohren (b1987) – to launch themselves into the world with a recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto. Nevertheless, that's what the CHAARTS Chamber Artists have done. Full marks for ambition. And as these musicians are plucked from the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and inspired by the Lucerne Festival Orchestra (both projects of Claudio Abbado), they will have learnt a few things along the way. So what if they miss the gravitas of the epic first movement or the meditative stillness of the *Larghetto*? They make up for it in clarity, perfect ensemble born of close listening, and palpable dedication to the music. The Rondo finale might be the most successful movement, with the lighter forces contributing to its easy-going progress.

Bohren presents an admirable take on Schumann's *Phantasie* too: cooler and more of a piece than Patricia Kopatchinskaja's molten approach on her recent recording (Audite, 5/16) – but then, he's clearly a very different sort of violinist. This *Phantasie* hangs together as it should and comes over less episodically than it often does.

The disc closes with Mozart reimagined by Jean Françaix. The Quintet for piano and winds is such a perfect and unusual piece in its uniquely pungent scoring – at least until Beethoven tried his hand at it – that one wonders why the Frenchman felt the need. Still, there it is, and it's hard to fault this loving performance of such a loveable work. The disc is called 'Equal'

and, all being so, comes as a distinctive calling card for an ensemble it may well prove worth following. **David Threasher**

Brahms

Concerto for Violin and Cello, Op 102^a.

Symphony No 4, Op 98^b

^a**Amanda Forsyth** *vc* **Canada's National Arts**

Centre Orchestra / Pinchas Zukerman *av*

Analekta © AN2 8782 (73' • DDD)

Recorded live at Southam Hall, National Arts

Centre, Ottawa, ^bNovember 26 & 27, 2014;

^aFebruary 4 & 5, 2015



Both of these performances were recorded live during Pinchas Zukerman's

final season as music director of the Orchestra du Centre National des Arts du Canada, of which his partner Amanda Forsyth, soloist in the Brahms Double Concerto, is the principal cellist. The 47-year-old orchestra, successor to the long-defunct Ottawa Philharmonic, may not be in the same league as, say, the Toronto Symphony but to judge by these recordings it is a decent outfit, as honest as the day is long.

Of the two performances, it is that of the symphony which is the greater surprise. To what extent Zukerman's reading is modelled on Carlos Kleiber's famous Vienna Philharmonic recording (DG, 4/81^R) – the timings are pretty well identical – is neither here nor there. Suffice it to say that it is a reading of trenchancy and power, more so, I would hazard, than some of the recorded performances of the Fourth by Zukerman's old comrades-in-arms Zubin Mehta and Daniel Barenboim.

The *Andante* and finale of the Double Concerto are pleasingly done. The soloists are in close accord, and Zukerman, now in his late sixties, still draws a sweet, silvery sound from the violin. The first movement is given a rather more robust treatment, with less of a sense of this as symphonic chamber music, though it's here that Zukerman's

decision to dispense with a conductor can sometimes be an inhibiting factor. Compare the new performance with, say, the exceptional 2003 LSO recording, where Bernard Haitink's conducting provides line and continuity while at the same time giving soloists Gordan Nikolitch and Tim Hugh all the security and freedom they need with which to work. **Richard Osborne**

Double Concerto – selected comparison:

Nikolitch, Hugh, LSO, Haitink (3/04) (LSO) LSO0043

Bruckner • Wagner

Bruckner Symphony No 7 (ed Haas)^a

Wagner Das Liebesmahl der Apostel^b

^b**Saxon State Opera Chorus; ^bCzech Philharmonic**

Chorus, Brno; ^bDresden Symphony Chorus;

^bCzech National Chorus, Prague; ^bMDR Radio

Chorus, Leipzig; ^bDresden Philharmonic Chorus;

^bDresden Chamber Choir; Staatskapelle Dresden /

Christian Thielemann

Profil © ② PH15013 (100' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the ^aSemperoper, Dresden,

September 2, 2012; ^bFrauenkirche, Dresden,

May 18, 2013



This is Christian Thielemann's third recording of

Bruckner's Seventh

Symphony, albeit the first on CD, the other two versions being available only on DVD/Blu-ray Disc. The most recent of these, issued by Opus Arte, preserves Thielemann's inaugural concert as principal conductor of the Staatskapelle Dresden. The recording on this CD comes from a concert the following evening and is, as might be expected, very similar in scope and contour. In both cases, the contribution of the Staatskapelle Dresden is magnificent, the strings in particular playing with quite exceptional depth of tone and expressiveness. Dynamic contrasts are carefully observed and the balance between instrumental groups is exemplary.

Profil lists the edition of the symphony being used as that of Haas, and so it is until the climax of the *Adagio*, where



Christian Thielemann offers Bruckner's Symphony No 7 and rare Wagner in live recordings issued by Profil

Thielemann adopts the cymbal clash, timpani and triangle from the otherwise similar Nowak edition. The performance of the *Adagio* is long-breathed and searching, the coda's eulogy to Wagner poignantly realised. The Scherzo is also very fine, rhythmically buoyant and, in the Trio, rich-toned and expressive. I was less persuaded by some of Thielemann's interpretative choices in the outer movements, however. The first movement starts promisingly, the expository material expertly laid out, but Thielemann's flexible approach finds the pace dropping at a number of points in the development and recapitulation, resulting in Bruckner's melodies occasionally sounding unduly extended and overwrought. It's a similar story in the finale, the performance lively and darting at first but becoming increasingly weighty as the movement progresses. Bruckner specifies *a tempo* at the start of the coda but here the impetus of the movement's opening is dropped in favour of a kind of slow-motion grandeur.

What distinguishes this release is the inclusion of an additional disc containing Wagner's rarely heard *Das Liebesmahl der Apostel* ('The Holy Supper of the Apostles'). Written for a male choral festival in Dresden in 1843, shortly before

Wagner commenced work on *Tannhäuser*, it features unaccompanied male voices for the majority of its half-hour span, orchestral forces being used to add colour and drama only in the work's final section. This performance was recorded in May 2013 on the 200th anniversary of Wagner's birth and involves choirs from Dresden, Leipzig, Brno and Prague. Although the singing on Boulez's recording on Sony is slightly more immediate and fervent, Thielemann's performance has the inestimable advantage of having taken place in Dresden's rebuilt Frauenkirche, allowing the spatial effects used by Wagner at the work's premiere to be replicated. Although a stereo recording can provide only an approximation of how this would have sounded in the venue, the result is nonetheless a more variegated and moving account than the rival Sony one. The CD booklet includes a number of interesting essays and photos as well as the text of the work in both German and English, although placed in different sections, which is not very helpful when using it as a translation. The recording of both works is first-class. **Christian Hoskins**

Bruckner – selected comparison:

Staatskapelle Dresden, Thielemann

(9/13) (OPAR) DVD OAI115D; SACD OABD7127D

Wagner – selected comparison:

NYPO, Boulez (6/79, 7/96*) (SONY) 88843 01333-2*

Bruckner

Symphony No 8

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Karl Böhm

Testament © SBT1512 (74' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin, November 26, 1969

Beethoven • Mozart • Stravinsky

Beethoven Symphony No 2, Op 36

Mozart Symphony No 34, K338/409

Stravinsky The Firebird – Suite (1919 version)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Karl Böhm

Testament © SBT1510 (80' • ADD)

Recorded live at the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, August 11, 1968



With the exception of the *Firebird* Suite, which he never recorded commercially, these live performances feature works central to Böhm's repertoire that he was recording for DG around the same time. In

the case of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony, the advantage is very much in favour of the live version, the 1976 studio recording with the Vienna Philharmonic being slightly staid, for all the beauty of the playing. The Berlin concert, performed when Böhm was 75, is faster-paced throughout and operates at a much higher level of tension, even if the conductor's unvarying tempi give the performance an uncompromising feel at times. Nevertheless, the *Adagio* is compellingly shaped and concludes with a deeply felt account of the coda.

With Beethoven's Second Symphony, the roles are reversed, if only because of the superlative playing and burnished sound on offer in Böhm's 1971 Vienna recording. The Salzburg Festival performance is similarly authoritative, however, with a strong rhythmic drive in the faster movements and affectionate phrasing in the *Larghetto*. The Berlin Philharmonic, sounding earthier than under Karajan, provide near flawless ensemble, although woodwind lines are not always ideally transparent, more a factor of the recording quality than the original balance, I suspect. The performance of Mozart's Symphony No 34 from the same concert is both spirited and expressive, the playing of the strings in the *Andante di molto* a particular highlight. As with his two studio recordings, Böhm includes the Minuet and Trio, K409, which was written 1782, several years after the completion of symphony.

Of particular interest here is the performance of Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite. Böhm rarely conducted music outside of the Austro-German tradition but seems to have had a soft spot for the 1919 Suite, performing it with the WDR Symphony Orchestra in Cologne in 1963 and during the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's tour of in Japan in 1975. This performance is at its most persuasive in the quieter music, the Princesses' Khorovod benefiting from a number of eloquent instrumental solos and the Berceuse having an almost Scriabinesque expressiveness. However, the Infernal Dance suffers from some surprisingly rough playing and the finale could do with a degree more weight and incisiveness.

There's a modicum of tape hiss on both discs but otherwise the sound quality is admirably clear and well balanced. Both releases feature detailed and well-researched booklet-notes by Richard Osborne.

Christian Hoskins

Bruckner – selected comparison:

VPO, Böhm (6/77⁸) (DG) 463 081-2GGA

Beethoven – selected comparison:

VPO, Böhm (11/72⁸, 10/75⁸) (DG) 479 1949GB6 or
(ELOQ) ELQ463 199-2

Dvořák · Suk

Dvořák Symphony No 8, Op 88 B163^a. Overture, 'Carnival', Op 92 B169^a **Suk** Serenade, Op 6

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik © 900145 (73' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie im Gasteig,

Munich, January 29-30, 2016



Mariss Jansons's first recording of Dvořák's Eighth Symphony

(made with the Oslo

Philharmonic in 1992 for EMI) conveyed an admirable feeling of freshness and affection while maintaining a clear-eyed sense of structural coherence in a work that can easily come across as episodic. A 2009 recording on RCO Live was perhaps even more successful, thanks in large part to the brilliantly articulate playing of Amsterdam's Concertgebouw Orchestra and a greater feeling of spontaneity.

Here, in a live performance from January 2016, Jansons is in a distinctly more *gemütlich* mood. Tempi are relaxed and phrases are lovingly caressed, dabbed with generous applications of rubato. Indeed, it's in the score's lyrical passages that this interpretation is most persuasive. The opening of the slow movement, for example, breathes with a natural unpredictability, and the hushed tone in the return of the third movement's melancholy dance (at 4'08'') is literally breathtaking. Another virtue is the sheer beauty of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra's playing, not only in terms of tonal refinement but internal balance. Whether this is due to the engineers' legerdemain or Jansons's – or, more likely, a combination of the two – the overall sound picture is dazzlingly transparent without sounding at all clinical.

Where the performance falls short is in its conspicuous lack of vigour. Without a stark juxtaposition of grace and grit, the various parts simply refuse to gel. Manfred Honeck elicits similarly refined, deliciously detailed playing from the Pittsburgh Symphony but finds a greater wealth of character and emotion. Much the same can be said for Jansons's *Carnival* Overture, which is far too well-mannered to rival classic accounts by Fritz Reiner (RCA) or Karel Ančerl (Supraphon).

The conductor's way with Suk's Serenade for Strings, on the other hand, is wholly satisfying. The first movement flows at an ideal *con moto* tempo and the finale radiates a grinning playfulness. If you can sample the end of the finely shaded *Adagio*, note the glistening solo strands as they

flutter into the ether – seemingly a forshadowing of the last of Strauss's *Four Last Songs*. This is by far the most ravishing interpretation of Suk's early masterpiece in the catalogue. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Dvořák Symphony No 8 – selected comparisons:

Oslo PO, Jansons (6/93⁸) (EMI/WARN)

➔ 586873-2 or 500878-2

RCO, Jansons (7/10) (RCO) RCO10001

Pittsburgh SO, Honeck (A/14) (REFE) FR710

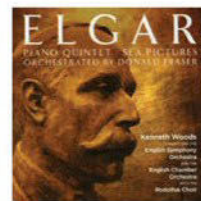
Elgar

Piano Quintet, Op 84^a. Sea Pictures, Op 37^b
(both orch Donald Fraser)

^b**Rodolfus Choir; ^bEnglish Chamber Orchestra;**

^a**English Symphony Orchestra / Kenneth Woods**

Avie © AV2362 (60' • DDD)



It's a brave soul who decides to reorchestrate *Sea Pictures*, one of Elgar's

most miraculously scored, ineffably touching and entrancingly interwoven achievements. This arrangement by British-born and now Illinois-based Donald Fraser (b1947) employs SATB choir, backed by a string quartet and full string section (following the example of Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro*). For all the sterling efforts of the ECO and Ralph Allwood's marvellous Rodolfus Choir under Kenneth Woods's sympathetic lead, I do miss a personal dimension – that directness of communication, intimacy and vulnerability that a Janet Baker or Sarah Connolly can bring to the texts – to say nothing of the myriad flecks of detail and dappled chiaroscuro that illuminate Elgar's original canvas.

I'm altogether more taken with Fraser's scoring of the Piano Quintet, which was sparked by an encounter with Peter Donohoe's imposingly 'orchestral' alliance with the Maggini Quartet (Naxos, 9/97; for what it's worth, I'd bestow a similar epithet upon John Bingham's contagiously combustible and thrillingly majestic partnership with the Medici Quartet – Meridian, 6/86). Initially unsure of how to proceed, Fraser was spurred into completing the task when he came across a diary entry by Alice (Lady) Elgar dated September 17, 1918: 'E. writing wonderful new music – real wood sounds & another lament wh. shd. be in a War Symphony.' To my ears Fraser's richly upholstered orchestration works a treat yet also manages to be astutely appreciative of the simmering passion and sense of loss that permeate this wistful creation (the *Adagio* slow movement is especially affecting). Plaudits, too, for Woods's characteristically lucid and fervent

performance with his own English Symphony Orchestra, opulently captured by balance engineer Simon Fox-Gál working in the University of Birmingham's shiny new Elgar Concert Hall. Devotees of the composer will, I think, find much to enjoy in this bold offering from Avie.

Andrew Achenbach

Gál • Mozart

Gál Piano Concerto, Op 57^a

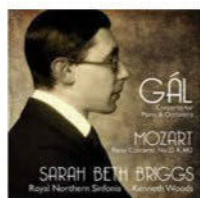
Mozart Piano Concerto No 22, K482^b

Sarah Beth Briggs *pf*^a *co-dir*

Royal Northern Sinfonia / ^aKenneth Woods,

^bBradley Creswick *co-dir*

Avie (AV2358 (69' • DDD)



If there is a happier 20th-century piano concerto than Hans Gál's of 1948, I don't

know what it is. Playing for 32 minutes in this premiere recording, its three substantial movements are brimful of memorable, catchy ideas and *joie de vivre*. The *Allegro energico ma non troppo* first movement opens with a fleeting premonition of Rawsthorne's wonderful Second Concerto but proceeds along its own individual path, wearing a

broad grin throughout. The central *Adagio* is one of the loveliest things he ever penned and the final *Allegretto vivace* Kenneth Woods describes as 'boiling over with wit and sparkle'.

The sunny demeanour is all the more astonishing given the circumstances of Gál's life at the time, deftly summarised by Woods in his booklet essay: he was twice displaced by the Nazis, interned in Britain and suffered the deaths of his mother, aunt, sister and eldest son. Sarah Beth Briggs gives a wonderfully balanced reading of music that seems familiar – in its classical poise and charm – and strange (much occurs beneath the surface, especially harmonically, that confirms its modernity). Kenneth Woods and the Royal Northern Sinfonia accompany superbly.

There is much to enjoy in the Mozart E flat Concerto, too, directed from the keyboard by Briggs, with leader Bradley Creswick as co-director. In a nicely relaxed reading, Briggs uses the cadenzas (probably recorded for the first time) by her former teacher, Denis Matthews, rather than Hummel's as used by Perahia in his classic recording with the ECO. Briggs's interpretation is not embarrassed by the comparison. With crystal-clear sound, this is the most enjoyable concerto disc I have

heard since Kreněk's piano concertos (4/16) and Deborah Pritchard's *Wall of Water* (5/15). Hang on: didn't Woods conduct those, too? **Guy Rickards**

Mozart – selected comparison:

Perahia, ECO (3/81^R, 8/87^R) (SONY) 82876 87230-2

Gilse

Piano Concerto, 'Drei Tanzskizzen'^a.

Variations on a Saint-Nicolas Song

^aOliver Triendl *pf* *Netherlands Symphony*

Orchestra / David Porcellijn

CPO (CPO777 934-2 (63' • DDD)



The Dutch composer Jan [Pieter Hendrik] van Gilse (1881-1944) is new to me, but I see

that CPO with the same forces as this disc has already recorded his four symphonies. A student of Engelbert Humperdinck among others, Gilse was clearly a serious heavyweight, but his music rarely found its way into print during his lifetime. This goes some way to explaining his obscurity, but, more significantly, he was one of those unfortunates who consistently find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Gilse's career was blighted by his

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refusal to succumb to Nazi blandishments. His two sons, who were active in the Dutch resistance movement, were captured and executed. Their deaths broke him.

There is nothing of the war years here. The *Dance Sketches*, I can tell you (unlike CPO's booklet, which surprisingly lacks any information about the music), date from 1927. At 42 minutes in length, the work is not so much a concerto as a symphonic paraphrase with an important piano part, its three movements paying homage to the minuet (*Tempo di minuettto moderato*), the waltz (*Hommage à Johann Strauss*) and various dances from the 1920s (*Quasi Jazz*). Gilse obviously knew his Mahler and Richard Strauss, while the waltz (longest of the three at 18'04") features a simple Johann Strauss II salon pastiche constantly obliterated by some astringent Ravelian brutality. I would say Gilse's gift for atmosphere and orchestration is greater than his gift for melody, but the work is certainly interesting, vividly recorded and played in commanding style by all concerned.

Though it is equally sumptuously recorded, I was not taken by the companion piece, a 21-minute set of variations dating from 1909 based on a Dutch children's song. It's a stolid, stately foursquare kind of theme and the variations are about as dull as they come. It sounds like a vehicle for van Gilse to exercise his orchestration skills and pay his respects to Brahms (who has nothing to worry about). I couldn't wait for it to end. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Godard

Symphonies - 'Symphonie gothique', Op 23; No 2, Op 57. Trois Morceaux, Op 51
Munich Radio Orchestra / David Reiland
CPO © CPO555 044-2 (69' • DDD)



Benjamin Godard's symphonic works met with a mixed response during his lifetime and slipped from view, like so much of his music, in the years following his death in 1895. Few were heard until the mid-1880s, when Edouard Colonne began to champion Godard's work, and gaps between composition and premieres result in confusions of chronology and opus numbering: the *Symphonie gothique* (1874) wasn't heard until 1881, by which time the Op 57 Symphony (1879) was already before the public.

The *Gothique* was popular in its day, while audiences professed themselves fazed by Op 57, which nowadays strikes us,

ironically, as the more conventional work – a standard four-movement structure, written for a Schumann-size orchestra, the first subject of its first movement sounding curiously like its equivalent in Dvořák's *New World*. The *Gothique* is more suite than symphony, though its self-conscious archaisms, gesturing towards medieval and Baroque music, marked it out as appealingly exotic for its first listeners. The Op 51 *Morceaux*, meanwhile, were not originally written as a set, and were also variably received. The opening 'Marche funèbre', more elegy than ceremonial, seemingly drew a blank, while the breezy 'Brésilienne' and the more substantial 'Kermesse' – a big Ländler in rondo form – enjoyed considerable success.

David Reiland and the Munich Radio Orchestra present us with stylish, idiomatic performances of all three works, handsomely recorded and scrupulously played; there's a nice sheen on the strings, and the woodwind are superb throughout. But it's still easy to have mixed feelings about the works themselves. As the Godard revival gathers pace, one notices just how far his deep distrust of Wagner's influence on French music dictated his own strengths and weaknesses. It resulted, for instance, in songs of great directness and immediacy of impact. But on this showing, it also made him a rather reticent symphonist, discreet and somewhat retro. Taking Schumann and Mendelssohn as models, he has their grace but only intermittently captures their drama. It's a beautifully presented disc, but you still might find it something of an acquired taste. **Tim Ashley**

Klenau

Symphony No 9

Cornelia Ptasek *sop* Susanne Resmark *contr*
Michael Weinius *ten* Steffen Bruun *bass*
Danish National Concert Choir and Symphony Orchestra / Michael Schönwandt
Dacapo © 2 8 226098/9 (89' • DDD • T/t)
Recorded live at the DR Konserthuset, Copenhagen, March 2014



No wonder Paul von Klenau got snuffy about the musical life of his native

Denmark. In his adopted Germany, Klenau had symphonies premiered by Hans Pfitzner and operas by Bruno Walter. He got close to Alban Berg and even aided that composer's theoretical thinking. But as Niels Krabbe suggests in his booklet-note, Klenau's propagation of 'key-determined 12-tone music' had a lot

to do with that qualifying wording: an attempt on Klenau's part to dissociate himself from 'full' 12-toners like Berg and Webern (as in *Jews*) when the Nazis got going.

In the end Klenau returned to a tonal style; but, as his final symphony shows, tone rows still featured (notably in the third and fourth movements of the eight-movement symphony). The piece was composed in 1945 after Klenau's return to Copenhagen but discovered in Vienna only as recently as 2001.

It's an odd beast, combining Latin Requiem texts with ponderous statements by Klenau himself (translated into Latin, naturally). 'Ponderous' describes much of the music too. Spend too long in Germany and perhaps one feels obliged to initiate a fugue every 10 minutes; too often, Klenau's fugue subjects are unwieldy and their treatment is aesthetically anaemic and technically limited. Transitions can be clunky but Klenau sometimes taps character (an example of both is around the 3'50" mark in the third movement). Ultimately, I'm inclined to agree with a Danish critic who cites the work's total lack of charm. For Klenau that's altogether fresher, try his cantata *Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Korvetts Christoph Rilke*, also on Dacapo (6 220532).

Bravo to these musicians for giving the piece every chance. Excellent playing, good if sometimes tired-sounding choral singing and excellent contributions from the inimitable Susanne Resmark (she has the first vocal entry, perhaps the disc's highlight) and open-voiced tenor Michael Weinius. Good to have a recording – especially if it means we don't have to have another performance.

Andrew Mellor

Mendelssohn

Die erste Walpurgisnacht, Op 60^a.
Overtures - Die Hebriden, Op 26; Ruy Blas, Op 95; Die schöne Melusine, Op 32

^aBirgit Remmert *contr* ^aJörg Fürmüller *ten*

^aRuben Drole *bar* ^aReinhard Mayr *bass*

^aZürich Sing-Akademie; Musikkollegium

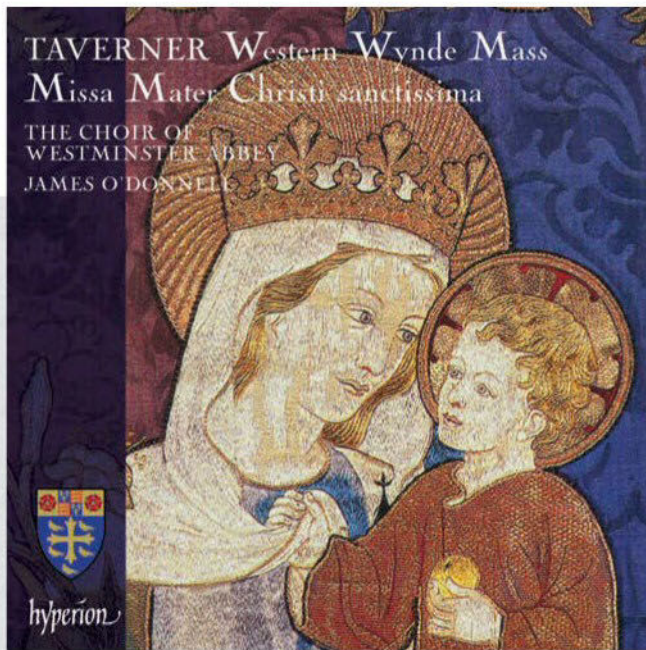
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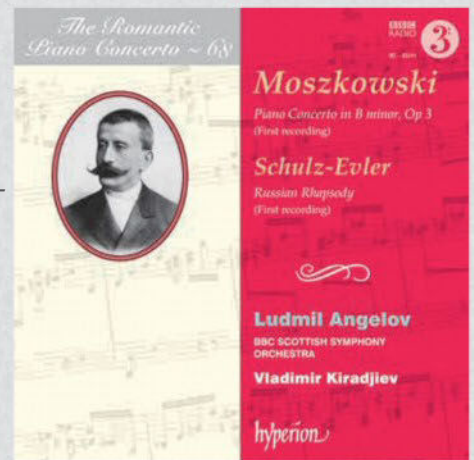


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Moritz Moszkowski:
Piano Concerto, Op 3

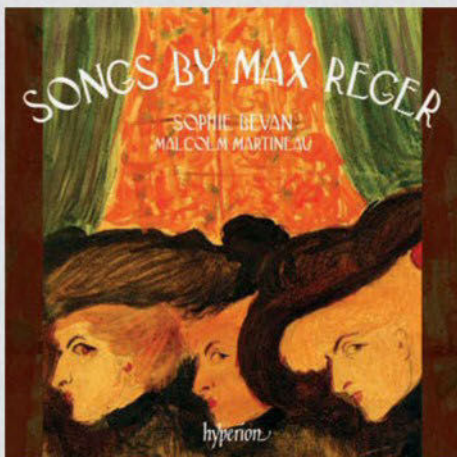
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head risks a flat-canvas loss of perspective but the big tune (the second subject at 2'00") is prominent enough, every slur and staccato registered with an attention to detail that some will find pedantic.

Where Boyd allows himself latitude is in the ebb and flow of tempi, which not so long ago was identified with Romantically inclined maestros of old; he played oboe for long enough under Abbado and Harnoncourt to know that what matters is what works. The becalmed sea before the new theme at 8'25" is rather stagily achieved, but I enjoyed the counterbalancing determination to allow no slackening of speed or intent at the overture's abrupt close.

The Fair Melusine and *Ruy Blas*, which demand less intervention in the shaping of their stories, work better still. For the latter, Boyd has elected the longer and more elaborated of Mendelssohn's two versions, neither of which corresponds to the corrupt and posthumously published edition heard ubiquitously until Bärenreiter commissioned Christopher Hogwood to do the scholarly legwork. Brandishing fire and brimstone well worthy of Victor Hugo's original story, John Eliot Gardiner and the LSO are essential listening in the alternative version.

It's curious that Mendelssohn should have turned up his nose at Hugo's story when he had so evidently relished putting a match to Christian pieties in *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*. The bands are bigger, so too the choral vibrato (not to say wobble), in nearly all the older recordings. The orchestra sounds closer to the microphones than in the overtures, a move that brings the instrumental bass into better focus. With the exception of baritone Ruben Drole as a wild and hairy Druid, the soloists are not well matched to the fresh-voiced chorus, whose weight of tone and volume could usefully have been given a helping hand by the engineers. While the new disc is recommendable on its own terms, with a caveat over the soloists, Kurt Masur's conducting (Berlin Classics, 9/74) is still unmatched for an informed sense of the fun Mendelssohn had when turning Shakespearean fairy music into Goethe's culture clash, and giving the pagans all the best (indeed, the only) tunes. **Peter Quantrill**

Moszkowski · Schulz-Evler

'The Romantic Piano Concerto, Vol 68'

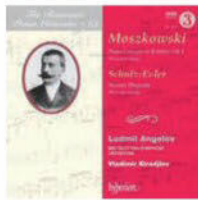
Moszkowski Piano Concerto, Op 3

Schulz-Evler Russian Rhapsody, Op 14

Ludmil Angelov pf BBC Scottish Symphony

Orchestra / Vladimir Kiradjiev

Hyperion © CDA68109 (65' • DDD)



Listening to the extended orchestral opening that launches this disc, darkness shot through with piercing piccolo, you might be hard-pressed to guess genre, let alone composer. Because this is Moszkowski's lost piano concerto, rediscovered as recently as 2008, whose journey from Paris's Bibliothèque Nationale to the recording studio is recounted in Jeremy Nicholas's lively and perspicacious notes. It's apt that, a quarter of a century after Moszkowski's E major Concerto launched Hyperion's groundbreaking Romantic Piano Concerto series, this B minor work should feature on Vol 68, played by the pianist and conductor who reintroduced it to the world in 2014, Ludmil Angelov and Vladimir Kiradjiev.

And it's quite a piece, lasting not far short of an hour. Moszkowski wrote it to launch his own career as a pianist and it's given an unstintingly engaged and engaging performance by pianist, conductor and the BBC Scottish SO, who have been such stalwarts throughout this series. That doom-laden introduction proves to be deceptive, for once the piano enters much of the music takes on a sunnier bent. Angelov's experience of Chopin serves him well, helping him make the most of writing that abounds in a sense of rhapsody and silvery filigree. Add to that an exuberant virtuosity and a penchant for spinning a good tune, and you have a very worthwhile addition to the series. And the orchestra is no mere accompanist here but a cheerful comrade-in-arms, Moszkowski delighting particularly in writing for woodwind.

The rolling lyricism of the *Adagio* is well brought out by Angelov (and the first clarinet), while the vivacious Scherzo, heralded by characterful pizzicato strings, unfolds as a deliciously playful conversation between soloist and orchestra. It's the finale in which the weight of the concerto lies – at least in terms of length – and it demands from the soloist tremendous stamina, with little downtime and no fewer than two cadenzas. As in the first movement, the minor-key introduction gives little hint of the ebullience to come, by turns energised and graceful. It says much for the musicians here that it seems not a bar too long, ending in a blazingly affirmative burst of B major.

The *Russian Rhapsody* by Adolf Schulz-Evler, two years Moszkowski's senior, is also making its recording debut. Based on a sequence of Russian-style melodies (the

first a sombre one, faintly reminiscent of something a Russian male-voice choir might sing), it fairly swiftly becomes a blatant showpiece for piano, which at one point is surely imitating a balalaika. Subtle it ain't, but again the performance from all concerned is compelling. However, from a pianophile point of view, it's the Moszkowski that's the bigger selling point here. **Harriet Smith**

Mozart

Violin Concertos – No 2, K211; No 5, K219.

Sinfonia concertante, K364^a

Frank Peter Zimmermann vn ^a**Antoine Tamestit** va

Chamber Orchestra of the Bavarian Radio

Symphony Orchestra / Radoslaw Szulc

Hänssler Classic © HC15042 (75' • DDD)



Frank Peter Zimmermann is no stranger to Mozart's violin concertos. He

first recorded them in 1984, when he was 19 years old – the same age as Mozart when he wrote them – and since then he has performed them innumerable times. So it's fitting that he should return to them on record as he enters his fifties, to offer the fruit of his years of experience of these works. (Concertos Nos 1, 3 and 4 plus the free-standing *Adagio* and Rondo movements appeared in the previous volume of the cycle last year.)

These new performances are brisk and no-nonsense in the current fashion, devoid of romantic lingering or interventionist point-making. Neither is there any quarter given to that tendency of older artists returning to works they recorded when younger to make fasts faster, slows slower and to weigh more heavily on the more purple moments. These performances sound just as youthful as Zimmermann's earlier recordings, with nothing placed, so to speak, in inverted commas or indulged unnecessarily. The Turkish episode in the Fifth Concerto's finale is flavoured with a pinch of paprika but not drowned in it.

Zimmermann is set slightly in front of the orchestra in the sound picture, although he blends perfectly when he plays along with the opening ritornellos. He is joined by Antoine Tamestit for the masterpiece among Mozart's string concertos, the *Sinfonia concertante*, in a performance that is as affectionate if not as pungently shaped as, say, that by Kremer, Kashkashian and Harnoncourt. **David Threshier**

Sinfonia concertante – selected comparison:

Kremer, Kashkashian, VPO, Harnoncourt

(12/84^a) (DG) 453 043-2GTA2



Nørgård and Storgårds: the Danish composer is represented on disc by the Finnish conductor in new recordings of four symphonies

Nørgård

Symphonies – No 4; No 5

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds

Dacapo 6 220646 (56' • DDD/DSD)

Nørgård

Symphonies – No 2 in One Movement;
No 6, 'At the End of the Day'

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds

Dacapo 6 220645 (54' • DDD/DSD)



'As if God the Father had thrown down pieces of a mosaic from the floor of heaven and asked me to work out the pattern.' Not Per Nørgård's words, of course, but those of his 1950s confidant Jean Sibelius in relation to his own Fifth Symphony. Nørgård's Fifth was premiered in 1990 in a concert that included Sibelius's; both are post-crisis, breakthrough scores and both represent a maturing of that concept of symphonic 'flow' that is so important to the two composers – the idea that once you get the symphonic river moving, the material will emerge readily enough.

Nørgård lets the listener decide how many movements the Fifth has but the material clearly springs from its opening gesture, as tectonic plates judder into a new position, allowing ideas to pour forth. The ensuing process is tight and controlled, even if the impression is of music that is entirely out of the composer's control in its impulse and liquidity. Nørgård often uses ostinatos, chaconnes or even single-note anchors to pin the discourse down, but they never curtail its freewheeling spirit. Even when textures are at their most fragmentary, the thread remains; the river keeps flowing. The detail in the writing – articulation bestowed upon single instruments in the tiniest of gestures – is beguiling.

So are these performances. Listening across the orchestra is vital in this music, just as in Sibelius. The Oslo Philharmonic sound settled at the foundations while suggesting spontaneity on the surface. Storgårds offers a touch more nimbleness and translucence than Sakari Oramo, who started this Dacapo cycle with the Vienna Philharmonic. The brass and percussion offer extreme restraint and delicacy. The Oslo string sound is tight but can be wholly embracing too.

Never more so than when it appears to wrap the rest of the ensemble in a fog in the

Fourth Symphony's chilling second movement. In this piece we sense the disintegration of the tonal principles that were prominent in the earlier works towards something that, in Nørgård's hands, is harmonically even more beautiful – the music getting more complex while getting less complicated. In that, the Fourth looks forward to the Fifth; in its slipping into grooves – the truest of them both unsettled and unsettling – it points towards the Sixth and Seventh. The symphony's game of opposites is expertly realised by Storgårds, as when the dark second movement 'Chinese Witch Lake' glances in the direction of the light first movement 'Indian Rose Garden' in a fleeting gesture at the symphony's close.

On a second disc, we have the chance to hear where those two pieces came from and what they led to. Nørgård's Second Symphony is that most rooted in the 'infinity series', the integer sequence discovered by the composer in the 1960s that controlled a number of his works of the period. As Frank Lehman suggests in a lucid explanation of Nørgård's exact algorithm on his *Unsung Symphonies* blog, the result is music that is 'locally unstable but globally secure'.

For 'globally secure' read exceptionally well-formed: a spinning out of the first

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

LESSER-KNOWN 18th-CENTURY COMPOSERS

David Threasher listens to some discs of music by contemporaries of Mozart and Haydn



L'arte del mondo under their conductor Werner Ehrhardt perform with 'all the thrust to be expected of today's HIP players'

There's more to the musical late 18th century than Mozart and Haydn, and sometimes it doesn't hurt to be reminded of the fact. There were hoards of Kapellmeisters and composers working alongside the two giants of the Austro-German Classical world, most of whom are now remembered as little more than names in dusty music dictionaries. New discs from Sony Classical of music by Benda and Wranitzky outwardly share similar design features, raising hopes that they may be the harbingers of a continuing series of recordings of the works of these mostly forgotten *Kleinmeister*.

Born near Prague, **Georg Anton Benda** (1722-95) was one of three brothers and father of a large brood who all followed him into the family trade. He was based at Potsdam and later at the court of Saxe-Gotha, but his music was nevertheless heard by Mozart and its influence can be identified in the Salzburger's *Zaide* and even as late as the Requiem. It seems that musical talent remains in the family, as this disc of six of his 12 Sinfonias is conducted by the scion of the dynasty, Christian Benda. The symphonies first appeared in print in 1950: although no composition dates are given in the booklet, these are all three-movement works with a central slow

movement flanked by *tutti* fast movements, with finales generally the more playful. The Prague Sinfonia Orchestra is a modern-instrument band with particularly resonant horns, especially when they are crooked high, as in the G major symphonies. The prominence of flutes demonstrates Benda's proximity to CPE Bach and Frederick the Great. A harpsichord offers subtle backing in the generous acoustic of Prague's Žofín Palace concert hall. Highlights include the all-too-brief No 8 in D, perhaps the most serious in outlook of the six, and No 10, whose finale is a delightful conversation between the horns and woodwind.

The Wranitzkys were another pair of Bohemian brothers, who gravitated towards Vienna: **Paul Wranitzky** (1756-1808) became a music director at the Habsburg capital's theatres, while **Anton Wranitzky** (1761-1820) served several noblemen, chief among them Prince Lobkowitz. The Swiss-based English conductor Howard Griffiths presents a symphony and a cello concerto by Paul and a violin concerto by Anton. The D major Symphony is also in three movements but betrays the later influence of *Sturm und Drang*, with a trumpet-bedecked nerviness reminiscent of mid-period Haydn, or perhaps Vanhal or Kraus. Wranitzky liked his pizzicato strings,

which provide a piquant change of scene in the first movement's recap and the plangent slow movement. The finale is great fun, with a characteristic 'juddering' string figure that underpins the second subject. The concertos are more lyrical and melodic than the symphony, just as Haydn's concertos abandon his motivic intensity for a more singing line. Both are muscular works with trumpets and drums: Paul's cello concerto is possibly the finer but Anton's violin concerto is full of ear-tweaking orchestral details. The Munich Chamber Orchestra provide immaculate performances and both soloists are fine, in performances shaped with a keen ear by Griffiths in the focused acoustic of the city's Kupferhaus Plenneg.

Johann Matthias Sperger (1750-1812) also fell under the spell of *Sturm und Drang*, as witness the uneasy suspensions and silences of his C minor and G minor symphonies. These are period-instrument performances by L'Arte del Mondo under Werner Ehrhardt, presented with all the thrust to be expected of today's HIP players. A double-bass virtuoso, Sperger mainly worked in the Hungarian and Slovak lands of the Habsburg Empire until landing a position in Mecklenburg-Schwerin (north Germany), where he worked alongside the bassist Antonio Rosetti. There's a clear

Haydn influence in slow movements and minuetts – that of the G minor being the least danceable minuet possible – and the D major symphony once again gets the trumpets out for a ceremonial march, an insouciant *Andante*, a brisk minuet and a rumbustious finale.

Michael Haydn (1737–1806) was the Mozarts' colleague at the Salzburg Prince-Archbishopric. Patrick Gallois, having contributed to the Naxos cycle of the elder Haydn's symphonies, now turns to the younger brother with Vol 1 of a projected cycle. As before, there's an active and insistent harpsichord continuo, which rather obscures orchestral detail. These are charming works, nevertheless, every bit the equal of many of Mozart's youthful works and allowing a greater degree of lyricism than brother Joseph would admit in his symphonies. Perhaps later instalments will fall to other artists without such a look-at-me keyboard player: let's hope so, as this music deserves it.

Michael Haydn is also present on a disc of viola concertos – perhaps the rarest and most surprising music in this selection. His concerto for viola, organ and strings is a rather more old-fashioned thing, not dissimilar to his brother's early violin-and-keyboard concerto, with a fairly stately *Allegro moderato*, viola answering organ, a chaste *Adagio* and a carefree finale. The Latvian-Australian viola player Andra Dārziņa founded Urban Camerata as recently as 2013; she draws a full-throated tone from her instrument both here and in (slightly) better-known solo concertos by **Franz Anton Hoffmeister** (1754–1812) and **Carl Stamitz** (1745–1801), with an especial sweetness in the lighter finale of the Hoffmeister and a moving expressiveness in the slow movement of the Stamitz. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



GA Benda Six Sinfonias
Prague Sinf Orch / C Benda
Sony Classical (P) 88875 18619-2



A & P Wranitzky Symphony. Concs
Munich CO / Griffiths
Sony Classical (P) 88875 12712-2



Sperger Three Symphonies
L'Arte del Mondo / Ehrhardt
DHM (P) 88875 05617-2



M Haydn Symphonies, Vol 1
Czech PO, Pardubice / Gallois
Naxos (B) 8 573497



M Haydn et al Viola Concertos
Dārziņa; Urban Camerata
CPO (P) CPO777 986-2

4096 notes of the infinity series across a single movement span where bells herald each of the 16 phases and every fourth phase is capped by an exquisite brass 'screen'. To begin, a delicate unison slides gradually into a semitone, and then the symphony is off on its way – cumulatively beautiful, structurally tangible and deliciously pure. The Oslo Philharmonic's ability to collectively recede as if into a minimalist canvas, parts emerging thereafter with brightness and intent without distorting the contours, makes this performance. In music that's deceptively tricky to pace, Storgårds delivers – again.

The Sixth Symphony is less cosmic and more rooted, but the river is still flowing: through rapids in the first movement into dark volcanic rock in the low-brass passacaglia of the *Lentissimo* and eventually towards the serene waterfalls of the finale. There's intense joy in the music's foibles; the slow movement's wah-wah trumpet almost sees it sidle into that nightclub dance that comes to fruition in the Seventh Symphony. After the spasmodic Fifth, the Sixth feels like a work of new beginnings, despite a title that playfully suggests the opposite; you best hear what annotator Jens Cornelius describes as a 'humorous game with the infinite' in the symphony's pregnant ending.

In this piece, Storgårds paints a more even, subtler picture than Thomas Dausgaard with the DNSO. In the Fifth, Storgårds offers more colour and character than Leif Segerstam with those same Danish forces while also avoiding his fellow Finn's histrionics. The rootedness Storgårds finds in the Second and Fourth Symphonies also puts him in pole position after Segerstam's pioneering recordings; there is a Brendel-like eloquence and inevitability here.

It was about time we had new recordings of these symphonies, works that are absolutely worthy of reappraisal by new generations even in their relative youth. These are magnificent performances, presented with comprehensive booklet-notes by Cornelius and an introduction by Storgårds himself. That I fully expect new recordings to take their place in 30 years or less is a testament to the music's relevance and strength. **Andrew Mellor**

Symphony No 2 – selected comparison:

Danish Nat SO, Segerstam (CHAN) CHAN9450

Symphonies Nos 4 & 5 – selected comparison:

Danish Nat SO, Segerstam (CHAN) CHAN9533

Symphony No 6 – selected comparison:

Danish Nat SO, Dausgaard (7/02) (CHAN) CHAN9904

Ravel

'Complete Orchestral Works'

Alborado del gracioso. Une barque sur l'océan. Boléro. Daphnis et Chloé^a. Fanfare pour L'éventail de Jeanne. Ma Mère l'Oye. Pavane pour une infante défunte. Piano Concertos^b – in G; for the Left Hand. Rapsodie espagnole. Shéhérazade: Ouverture de féerie. Le tombeau de Couperin. Tzigane^c. La valse. Valses nobles et sentimentales

^cRay Chen *vn* ^bYuja Wang *pf*

^aZurich Sing-Akademie; Zurich

Tonhalle Orchestra / Lionel Bringuier

DG (B) (4) 479 5524GH4 (4h 03' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Tonhalle, Zurich, 2014-15

^bFrom 479 4954GH (11/15)



Rival Ravel recordings are in abundance at the moment, with various discs of

individual works and a couple of sets of the orchestral music on the go. Leonard Slatkin's for Naxos, highly collectable until the most recent, comparatively commonplace CD of the Ravel orchestral transcriptions (Mussorgsky's *Pictures* included), still has a few gaps in it, whereas Stéphane Denève's with the Stuttgart Radio Orchestra (SWR Music) is now complete, unless he plans to do the transcriptions as well. Denève's newest disc was of the ballet *Daphnis et Chloé* (6/16), where he was up against a more compelling version by the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Yannick Nézet-Séguin (BIS, 5/15). Now the market becomes even busier with this four-CD box, containing all the orchestral works including the two piano concertos but without the transcriptions.

The pairing of the piano concertos was released separately last year, possibly because it featured that young star-of-the-moment Yuja Wang. Her interpretations would certainly not be my first choice, when you consider that we already have Krystian Zimerman, Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Pascal Rogé to choose from at a much higher and deeper level of musical and stylistic perceptiveness, and, in the G major Concerto, timeless classics by Martha Argerich and Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Such considerations can often be niggling when it comes to compendium boxes: Wang certainly has a following and many will rejoice that she is the chosen soloist here, but for me there is an imbalance between the dazzling virtuosity and the degree of personality that she brings to the music. The Left Hand Concerto fares better than the G major in that respect, and on the positive side in both concertos the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra under Lionel



Yuja Wang's recordings of the concertos with Lionel Bringuier and the Tonhalle Orchestra feature in the conductor's set of Ravel's orchestral works

Bringuier are spot-on in Gallic polish, piquancy and rhythmic precision.

Indeed, it is in the purely orchestral works where the strengths of this set truly and less equivocally lie. Yes, we have here yet another *Daphnis et Chloé*, and the one to go for is still Nézet-Séguin's if you want a modern recording of the ballet alone. But Bringuier has the overall sweep and the detail of the score at his fingertips: he does not disappoint when it comes to establishing contrasts of colour or, for example in the 'Danse générale' of Part 1, finding that elastic, almost conversational quality that certain phrases of the music seem to suggest. The woodwind guffaws and the saucy brass glissandos in the 'Danse grotesque de Dorcon' all add to an interpretation in which characterisation is vivid and the narrative graphically and sympathetically told.

The first CD of the set combines *Shéhérazade*, *Le tombeau de Couperin* and *Boléro* with the fearsome *Tzigane*, composed for the intrepid Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi and, in its tricks of the trade, out-Paganini-ing Paganini. As Ravel's friend Hélène Jourdan-Morhange said, 'He thought that Paganini might be able to suggest to him some unsuspected obstacles, but I can safely say Ravel was the more devilish of the two'. Ray Chen, possessing

the right technical arsenal, also has the diabolical temperament and gypsy flair to carry the day. Neither Denève's set nor Slatkin's (yet) contains *Tzigane*, so that is a distinct plus for this one.

When it comes to the works common to all sets – *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, *Rapsodie espagnole*, *La valse*, *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, *Alborada del gracioso* and so on – Bringuier's ear for style and mood, shaping and phrasing, together with the orchestra's ready response, just about gives this set the edge over its competitors, but it's a close-run thing. **Geoffrey Norris**

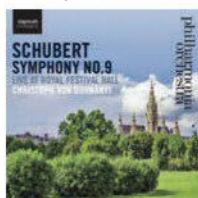
Schubert

Symphony No 9, 'Great', D944

Philharmonia Orchestra /

Christoph von Dohnányi

Signum © SIGCD461 (53' • DDD). Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, October 1, 2015



than a poet's; less an act of musical divination, more a judicious restatement of the musical facts by a seasoned professional.

The results, to my ears, are disappointing. Playing all but the coda of the first movement in the same unvarying pulse has a certain logic to it but in the final analysis it trivialises the music, allowing structure to take precedence over whatever one chooses to think of as musical meaning. The playing of the slow movement offers a comparably featureless landscape. The stilled horn transition at bar 158 ('Ask not for whom the bell tolls...') slips too easily by and the movement's tragic climax is neither tragic nor entirely climactic.

Dohnányi's performance takes on a rather more human face in the third movement's Trio and in the finale, where his direction is buoyant, unrushed and more rhythmically fluid than in the first movement. But even here it is a rather unvarying performance: too genteel to admit of any real difference between Schubert's *forte*, *sforzando* and *double forte* markings.


For all that it dazzles and exults, there is a deeper, darker side to the *Great* C major: a sense of harvest home after human toil. I hear that in the glowingly wrought yet still-living recorded performances of Furtwängler and Böhm. But not here.

Richard Osborne

Selected comparisons:

BPO, Furtwängler (10/57⁸) (DG) 447 439-2GORBPO, Böhm (1/64⁸) (DG) 453 664-2GFS

Scriabin

Symphonies – No 1^a; No 2, Op 29^bEkaterina Sergeeva *mez* Alexander Timchenko *ten*
London Symphony ^aChorus and Orchestra /
Valery GergievLSO Live  LSO0770 (91' • DDD/DSD • T/t)Recorded live at the Barbican, London, ^aMarch 20,
^bApril 10, 2014

Thanks to the focus on Scriabin's music that came with the run-up to the centenary of his death last year and during the actual anniversary itself, the orchestral works received more exposure in the concert hall than they normally do, a result of which has been that new live or post-concert studio recordings have become available to add to the venerable complete sets conducted by Svetlanov and Muti. When Gergiev's interpretations of *The Divine Poem* (Symphony No 3) and *The Poem of Ecstasy* (No 4) were released last autumn, they were trumped by the same coupling from the

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra under Vasily Petrenko (LAWO Classics, 12/15), whose keener ear for the intricacies of Scriabin's visionary world of sound was a crucial factor.

With this two-disc set of the First and Second Symphonies, recorded live with the London Symphony Orchestra in 2014, Gergiev is more or less on his own in terms of modern recordings, although Mikhail Pletnev's version of the First Symphony (coupled with *The Poem of Ecstasy*) remains unchallenged in its sense of intoxication, febrile energy and in the special sound of the Russian National Orchestra and the Chamber Choir of the Moscow Conservatoire. Gergiev's approach, as in *The Divine Poem* and *The Poem of Ecstasy*, can at times sound generalised and all-purpose, but he does have the measure of the music's fluidity and its surges of passion and hedonistic repose, with a sixth-movement finale fielding two lustrous soloists (Ekaterina Sergeeva and Alexander Timchenko) and the London Symphony Chorus in excellent form for the crowning paean to art. The Second Symphony benefits from some enchanted solo playing (particularly the chirruping flute) in the long central slow movement, and altogether finds Gergiev and the LSO exploring the music's sinew and its emotional flux to

more consistently involving effect than in the First. **Geoffrey Norris**

Symphony No 1 – selected comparison:

Russian Nat Orch, Pletnev (8/15) (PENT) PTC5186 514

Stanford

Piano Concerto No 2, Op 126^a. Dante

Rhapsodies, Op 92. Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel. Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5


Benjamin Frith *pf* ^aBBC National

Orchestra of Wales / Andrew Gourlay

Champs Hill  CHRCD042 (74' • DDD)

Premiered in Norfolk, Connecticut, in 1915 by the pianist Harold Bauer, Stanford's

Piano Concerto No 2, actually composed in 1911, is a work in the grand tradition. The composer should have been in the USA to conduct the work himself as part of a tour of America's eastern seaboard but the sinking in May 1915 of the *Lusitania*, on which Stanford had booked his passage, put paid to all his well-laid plans and he had to wait until December 1916 to hear (and conduct) it for the first time in Bournemouth. Stanford may well have derived the epic

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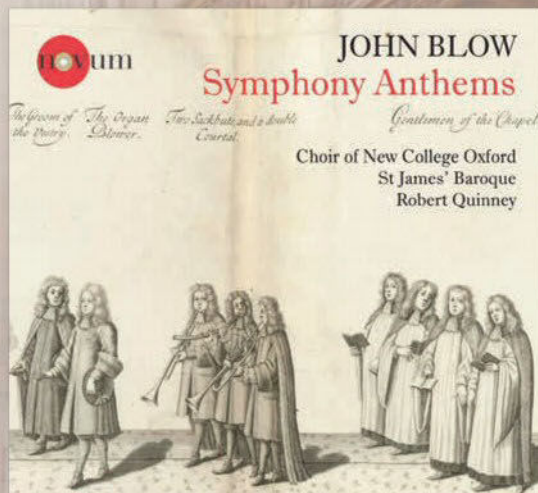
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nature of his work from Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2, of which he had given the first English performance with Rachmaninov at Leeds in 1910; yet, for all that, Stanford's lyrical gifts in the second subjects of the first and last movements, and the poetic opening melody of the slow movement, have an affecting individuality which we have been slow to acknowledge in our zeal to compare him, somewhat crudely, with Brahms and other contemporaries.

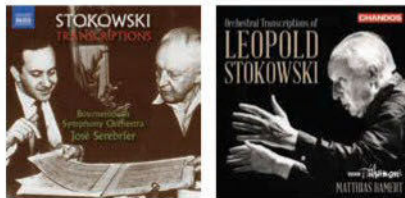
Benjamin Frith, clearly a fervent advocate of Stanford's chamber music, brings out the abundant invention of the concerto in the clarity and nuance of his touch and phrasing. In particular, the visionary and intimate chamber idiom of the first movement's development, introspective in mood, is especially moving and beautifully shaped. This same sensitivity is brought by Frith to the little-known three *Dante Rhapsodies*, Op 92, which Stanford wrote for Percy Grainger in 1904 – unjustly neglected tone-poems for solo piano, full of emotional insight and craftsmanly legerdemain. This is a fine recording in generous sound, with sympathetic orchestral playing from the BBC NOW and its conductor Andrew Gourlay. Might Frith perhaps now tackle the much lighter but equally delightful Piano Concerto No 1? **Jeremy Dibble**

'Stokowski Transcriptions'

JS Bach Orchestral Suite No 3, BWV1068 – Air. 'Little' Fugue, BWV578. Sheep may safely graze (from Cantata No 208). Toccata and Fugue, BWV565 **Boccherini** Minuet **Mussorgsky** A Night on the Bare Mountain **Purcell** Dido and Aeneas – Dido's Lament **Tchaikovsky** Solitude, Op 73 No 6 **Stokowski** Traditional Slavic Christmas Music **Wagner** Das Rheingold – Entry of the Gods into Valhalla. Die Walküre – Ride of the Valkyries
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / José Serebrier
Naxos © 8 578305 (61' • DDD)

'Orchestral Transcriptions of Leopold Stokowski'

JS Bach Jesu, joy of man's desiring. Orchestral Suite No 3, BWV1068 – Air. Toccata and Fugue, BWV565. Wachet auf, BWV645 **Buxtehude** Sarabande and Courante **Byrd** Pavane and Gigue **Chopin** Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35 – Marche funèbre **Clarke** Trumpet Prelude **Franck** Panis angelicus **Ippolitov-Ivanov** In the Manger **Mozart** Piano Sonata, K331 – Turkish March **Mussorgsky** A Night on the Bare Mountain **Purcell** Dido and Aeneas – Dido's Lament **Shostakovich** United Nations March **Sousa** The Stars and Stripes Forever **Tchaikovsky** String Quartet No 1, Op 11 – Andante cantabile
BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Matthias Bamert
Chandos © CHAN10900 (80' • DDD)



Bach purists should look away now. Leopold Stokowski's 1927 orchestration of the D minor Toccata and Fugue calls for double woodwind, brass, two harps, timpani, celesta and a full-scale symphonic string section. And he makes every instrument count, in an arrangement loved by generations who heard Stokowski himself conduct it on the soundtrack of Disney's *Fantasia*, and which can still be relied upon to raise the blood pressure of the stuffer kind of period-instrument aficionado.

In other words, it's a knockout, and it's understandable that it should open both of these discs. According to the booklet, José Serebrier was apparently reluctant to include the Toccata and Fugue in his Stokowski series for Naxos, feeling that Stokowski's own interpretation was definitive. We're not told Matthias Bamert's views, but he and Serebrier both make something individual from Stokowski's gothic effects. Bamert relishes pure sonority. Serebrier's performance is less extreme – though that's a relative term with Stokowski transcriptions – but has more of a sense of musical line: a performance, rather than a sequence of thrilling sounds.

Maybe that's unfair on Bamert, because from that point in these are very different compilations. Serebrier's is the more sober (again, a relative term). Stokowski's Wagner transcriptions do little more than tweak the original scoring for orchestral performance – likewise his enlargement of Boccherini's famous Minuet, though Serebrier's Bournemouth players deliver it with a charming swing. Tchaikovsky's *Solitude*, however, gets the full Hollywood treatment, swathed in rippling harps and woodwind curlicues, and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra respond with glowing enthusiasm, captured – as Edward Greenfield noted here in 2007 – in demonstration-quality sound.

The Chandos compilation includes nearly 20 minutes' more music, devoted mostly to shorter pieces. It's practically a selection box of lollipops, ranging from Shostakovich's maddeningly jaunty *United Nations March* (perfect material for a guess-the-composer quiz) to a Buxtehude Sarabande and Courante with a warbling solo part for – seriously – ondes martenot. There's an infectious energy to these performances, and the sound is for the most part bright and clear. Unfortunately,

there's a heavy reverb on the strings throughout: you get used to it, but in the slower numbers – such as Bach's Air and Franck's *Panis angelicus* – the BBC Philharmonic violins swerve dangerously close to Mantovani.

So, which to choose? Serebrier is perhaps the more musically satisfying choice, with superior recorded sound and some beautiful playing. But if you're after a really sinful treat and don't mind your string sound high-gloss, the Chandos disc is unquestionably the more indulgent. Come on – don't you want to hear what *The Stars and Stripes Forever* sounds like with added xylophone glissandos? Of course you do: you're only human. Go on, buy both.

Richard Bratby

R Strauss

Ein Heldenleben, Op 40^a.

Intermezzo – Four Symphonic Interludes^b

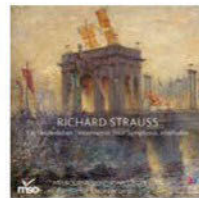
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra /

Sir Andrew Davis

ABC Classics © ABC481 2425 (69' • DDD)

Recorded live at Hamer Hall, Melbourne,

^bAugust 21 and ^aSeptember 5, 2015



The first instalment of Strauss from Andrew Davis and the Melbourne

Symphony Orchestra had the *Four Last Songs* as its centrepiece (11/14). The second is all about the maestro and the band of which he has been chief conductor since 2013 – and the results are impressive in many ways.

Davis brings the easy confidence and command of an instinctive Straussian to both works on the programme. It's a canny coupling, too, in which the *Intermezzo* interludes serve to emphasise the domestic reality that lies behind the tongue-in-cheek self-mythologisation of *Heldenleben*. The pacing throughout is immaculate, climaxes are gauged with skill, and there's a real sense of the orchestra giving of their best for both the conductor and this taxing repertoire. These are both live performances, and the audience's appreciation – after the tone-poem especially – is also very apparent.

Highlights include loving accounts of both the wonderful 'Träumerei am Kamin' from Strauss's 'bourgeois comedy' and the tender moments between Hero and Companion in *Heldenleben*. Davis is expert in the complex manoeuvres of the tone-poem's central battle, and keeps the thread through the complex web of self-quotation of the 'works of peace', which culminates in



An instinctive Straussian: Andrew Davis continues his series of the composer's orchestral works with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

an all too audible – and apt – sense of the hero's exhaustion. Elsewhere there's a hint of everything being perhaps a little too good-humoured, though, with the hero's theme appearing to chug jovially along rather than pulse with the urgency of creative inspiration. But maybe that's all part of the conductor's plan to emphasise his domestic side, and it's an approach further underlined by the well-played but rather equable Companion presented by concertmaster Dale Bartrop.

It's a shame, though, that the engineers at Melbourne's Hamer Hall present a swimmy acoustic that robs the playing of immediacy and bite, with the middle of the orchestra always sounding rather congested and the strings, in particular, coming across as overly smooth and muted. There are more immediate-sounding *Heldenleben*s out there (from Reiner and Karajan to, more recently, Thielemann and Nelsons, to name but a few), and the better-recorded Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics are ultimately more recommendable in the *Intermezzo* Interludes. But this doesn't stop the disc serving as a valuable memento of the live performances and a record of a fine Straussian on masterly form.

Hugo Shirley

Stravinsky

Apollon musagète. Concerto in D.
Pulcinella – Suite

Tapiola Sinfonietta / Masaaki Suzuki
BIS (F) BIS2211 (65' • DDD/DSD)



Intentionally or not, Masaaki Suzuki's first foray into 20th-century repertoire on disc recalls that of Neville Marriner, whose 1960s pairing of the *Pulcinella* Suite and *Apollo* (Argo, 10/68) served notice that the Academy of St Martin in the Fields were moving away from Baroque moorings. Suzuki has chosen to set down these works with a Finnish ensemble but many of the features of his Bach Collegium Japan recordings survive the transition.

We are accustomed to crisp, squeaky-clean Stravinsky nowadays, but Suzuki is a time traveller who restricts string vibrato more than some will like. In *Apollo* he delights in refreshing Stravinsky's unexpected chords with a distinctly scrunchy edge, while his nicely animated *Pulcinella* tends to be voiced *à l'ancienne*. Balances are carefully considered throughout, the microphones brought quite close within an

ample acoustic. Indeed, the only sonic surprise is the sharp intake of breath, if that's what it is, at the very start. What's missing is less easily defined. In *Pulcinella* it's perhaps a certain charm and rusticity, although Stravinsky would doubtless have been delighted to find his disavowal of national characteristics and earth-rootedness so comprehensively endorsed.

In *Apollo*, where Yuri Bashmet's minutely responsive Moscow Soloists have already experimented with vibrato-lite sonority, the music-making feels equally accomplished yet just a little stiff. Ignoring for the moment the composer's own anti-expressive posturing, shouldn't that final 'Apotheosis' take us to a more emotive place? Here it's more a case of the argument bringing us back to square one without much sense of transformation. Again, though, you might appreciate the conductor's pristine way with the score.

There's a bonus item too, a Concerto in D avoiding scruffiness or lugubriousness. Rest assured that this is not the kind of neo-classical Stravinsky that proceeds gracefully via a series of jerks. Nor is it ever over-inflated or glossy.

David Gutman


Apollon musagète – selected comparison:

Moscow Sols, Bashmet (5/07) (ONYX) ONYX4017

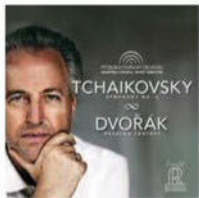
Tchaikovsky · Dvořák

Dvořák *Rusalka Fantasy* (arr Honeck/Ille)
Tchaikovsky *Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique'*,
 Op 74

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra /
Manfred Honeck

Reference Recordings (F)  FR720SACD
 (67' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at Heinz Hall for the Performing
 Arts, Pittsburgh, April 17 & 19, 2015



'It is not necessary to
 add sugar to honey.'
 Manfred Honeck
 quotes his predecessor

as music director at the Pittsburgh
 Symphony Orchestra, Mariss Jansons, in
 his lengthy booklet-notes to his recording
 of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony.
 Honeck's account is far from syrupy but,
 compared with Jansons's own Oslo
 Philharmonic recording, it is expansive and
 just a little disengaged.

Woodwinds blend well and Honeck
 draws an energetic burst in the first-
 movement *Allegro vivo*, but there is a
 plodding, matter-of-fact feel to the
 pizzicatos in the closing bars. The 5/4 waltz
 charms, with gently slurred string
 articulation. The March progresses in
 businesslike fashion, with a triumphant
 swagger to the Pittsburgh brass, but both
 Jansons in Oslo and Evgeny Mravinsky, in
 his classic stereo Leningrad Phil recording,
 inject a greater sense of unrest. The strings
 reserve their passion for the finale, a slower
 burn than Jansons and Mravinsky and less
 moving. Jansons demonstrates that the
Pathétique can really move without reaching
 Mravinsky's near-hysteria (which I confess
 to adoring).

The silence at the end of the *Pathétique* is
 rudely interrupted by the crashing,
 triangle-led pomp of the Polonaise from
 Act 2 of *Rusalka*, the opening strains of
 Honeck's artfully stitched together fantasy
 from Dvořák's opera. It's an entertaining
 collage featuring many of the familiar
 characters, from the splashing water
 nymphs to Ježibaba's cackles. *Rusalka's*
 Song to the Moon is taken by solo violin,
 but can't quite tug the heartstrings as easily
 as a soprano.

I usually associate Reference
 Recordings with the splendid engineering
 of 'Prof' Johnson (Keith de Osma
 Johnson). I'm not surprised his name is
 absent here, as the sound is disappointing,
 possibly due to the recording being made
 in concert. The Heinz Hall acoustic is
 cloudy and bass-light, with strings lacking
 richness or depth, a particular problem

for the double basses in their mourning
 sighs in the final movement.

Honeck praises the 'utmost technical
 perfection' of his Pittsburgh players and
 this description best characterises their
 playing – proficient but lacking in emotion.

Mark Pullinger

Tchaikovsky – selected comparisons:

Leningrad PO, Mravinsky (11/61st, 8/87)

(DG) 419 745-2GH2 or 477 5911GOR2

Oslo PO, Jansons (1/87th, 5/87) (CHAN)

CHAN8446 or CHAN10392

'Bel canto amore mio'

Overtures to Bellini I Capuleti e i Montecchi

Donizetti *Don Pasquale*. Roberto Devereux.

Ugo, conte di Parigi **Meyerbeer** *Margherita*

d'Anjou **Mercadante** *Emma d'Antiocha*

Rossini *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Tancredi

Ile-de-France National Orchestra /

Enrique Mazzola

NoMadMusic (E) NMM029 (57' • DDD)



Various bizarre
 happenings surround
 this creditable new
 release: a

contemporary review of unparalleled
 savagery from a French online source, an
 uncredited running time for *Il barbiere di*
Siviglia of nearly 12 minutes (the last five
 prove to be from rehearsals), and a CD
 sleeve photo of holidaymakers on a sunny
 coastal cruise focusing on the inside of one
 lady's ankles.

Mazzola – who has been conducting
 Glyndebourne's *Barbiere* this summer –
 sounds as if he is getting on well with the
 orchestra (who share Paris's new
 Philharmonie venue) of which he has now
 been principal conductor for three years.
 His love for this repertoire, from which he
 has cherry-picked this unusual selection of
 overtures, is declared in the booklet-note
 and made apparent in performances in
 which the dramatic purpose of every
 musical section is made transparently clear.
 Nor is the size of ensemble used ever too
 Romantically large. This lifts the disc above
 the normal run-of-the-mill orchestral
 showpiece and (*pace* that online critic's
 accusations of overloud playing) governs
 the dynamics with which Mazzola works.
 These are feisty overtures to introduce
 'live' evenings of specific drama, not
 abstract self-contained concert pieces.

The presence of valuable Opera Rara
 performances notwithstanding, the
 Meyerbeer, Mercadante and Donizetti's
Ugo must count as collectable rare items.
 The Meyerbeer is especially attractive in its
 early glimpse of the chameleon-like

composer who had here immersed himself
 in Italian style and content to a point that a
 blind tasting might fool many listeners. It
 really seems like this composer's equivalent
 of Wagner's *Das Liebesverbot*, although
 written some 16 years earlier.

The disc is well recorded (including the
 'offstage' band in *Emma d'Antiocha*) and
 played. My only grouse is not with the
 lady's ankles but with the lack of specific
 notes on the music. **Mike Ashman**

'Dawn to Dust'

Muhly Control (Five Landscapes)

A Norman Switch^a Read Thomas EOS

(Goddess of the Dawn)

^aColin Currie *perc*

Utah Symphony Orchestra / Thierry Fischer

Reference Recordings (F)  FR719SACD

(70' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at Maurice Abravanel Hall,
 Salt Lake City, 2015



This disc contains
 premiere recordings
 of the three works
 commissioned by

the Utah Symphony to celebrate its
 75th birthday, and as a bright and upbeat
 showcase for the orchestra it does its job
 nicely. Two are overtly inspired by
 Utah's natural landscapes, while the
 third (and most exciting) is primarily
 enthralled by the boisterous virtuosity
 of its percussion soloist, Colin Currie.
 More on that in a moment.

First comes the five-movement *EON* (the
 goddess of the dawn) by Augusta Read
 Thomas, who knows what she wants from
 an orchestra: a sound that is 'always
 luminous and never muddy', she writes.
 There's certainly a lot of light in her music,
 with clear space between the wholesome
 horns and triangles of 'Shimmering' or the
 chimes and bass clarinets of 'Spring Rain'.
 This is neat, well-crafted writing – but
 Read Thomas also aims to imbue the music
 with her 'physical and mental sense of
 caprice' and, to me, all that neatness
 negates any real sense of caprice. Thierry
 Fischer conducts diligently, without a great
 deal of wildness.

There is one looming template when it
 comes to capturing Utah's landscape in
 orchestral sound: credit to Nico Muhly for
 acknowledging Messiaen's visionary 1972
 work *Des canyons aux étoiles*... upfront in his
 booklet-notes. But where Messiaen conjured
 the rocks and expanses in magnificently
 mystic terms, Muhly's prosaic language
 doesn't come close. His piece, *Control*, is
 dense with references to Utah's history,

51ST INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

WRATISLAVIA CANTANS 'EUROPA CANTANS'

GENERAL DIRECTOR – ANDRZEJ KOSENDIAK
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR – GIOVANNI ANTONINI



WROCLAW & LOWER SILESIA, POLAND

3-18 SEPTEMBER 2016

This year edition of Wratislavia Cantans, held as part of the **European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016**, presents the wealth and diversity of European music, featuring, among others, such masterpieces as Bach's *Passions*, Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, symphonies by Beethoven and Shostakovich. **Sir John Eliot Gardiner**, **Jordi Savall**, **Andrey Boreyko**, and **Philippe Jaroussky** are some of the stars we have invited for 2016.

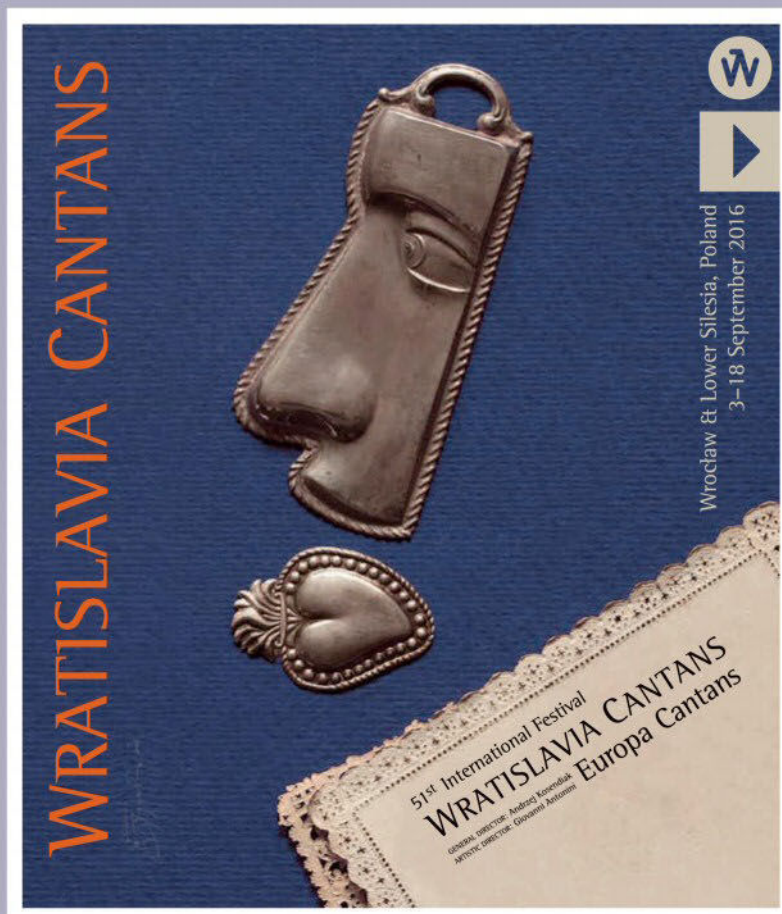
Wratislavia Cantans 2016 opens with *Symphony No. 13 'Babi Yar'* by Dmitri Shostakovich under the baton of Andrey Boreyko. *St John Passion* is presented in a staged version for the first time in Wrocław. Alongside popular masterpieces of European music we have programmed a concert of music by Antonio Zaccaria da Teramo performed by La Fonte Musica. Philippe Jaroussky sings arias by Cesti, Cavalli, Legrenzi, Rossi, and Steffani.

Huelgas Ensemble performs fragments of a *Missa pro defunctis* by Jacobus de Kerle. **NFM Leopldinum Chamber Orchestra** presents works by György Ligeti alongside experimenting Baroque composers: Dario Castello, Claudio Monteverdi and Biagio Marini. Performances by **Jordi Savall**, **Giovanni Sollima**, and **Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares** add a thrill of discovery.

Kristian Bezuidenhout and **Alina Ibragimova** treat us to Mozart's *Sonatas* for fortepiano and violin. **Vox Luminis** focuses on Johann Sebastian Bach's ancestors and himself, and Il Giardino Armonico on Johann Sebastian's sons. *St Matthew Passion* in the masterful interpretation of **Monteverdi Choir** and **English Baroque Soloists** under the baton of Sir John Eliot Gardiner is the Festival's magnificent finale.

This year's Wratislavia Cantans has been programmed by **Giovanni Antonini**, Artistic Director of the festival since 2013.

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VIVALDI CONCERTOS

David Vickers listens to a clutch of releases showing the variety of the Red Priest's concertante works



Federico Guglielmo and L'Arte dell'Arco offer an exciting set of Vivaldi's Concertos and Sonatas on Brilliant Classics

The accusation that Vivaldi wrote the same work several hundred times is a grossly unfair cliché, and an old chestnut that is exploded yet again by a selection of recent releases that range from scholarly explorations of obscurities to refreshing engagements with familiar masterpieces. **Federico Maria Sardelli** and Modo Antiquo's examination of 'The Young Vivaldi' was recorded in Florence's historic Teatro Pergola, and an assortment of sonatas and concertos affords us a precious glimpse into the Red Priest's formative years during the first decade of the 1700s.

An unusual six-movement violin concerto in D minor (RV813) was formerly assumed by some scholars to have been composed by Torelli but is now accepted as authentic early Vivaldi. The solo part is played vivaciously by Enrico Casazza, and in the quiet Andante surprising harmonic twists are judged beautifully by Modo Antiquo's strings. The Sonata in G major for violin, cello and basso continuo (RV820), which Sardelli rediscovered by chance, survives in a copy made shortly after 1700 by the choirboy Johann Georg Pisendel (many years before the future Dresden concertmaster studied with Vivaldi in Venice); the distinctly Corellian

music is thought to be the Red Priest's earliest-known chamber composition.

The outstanding highlight is the cheerful four-part sonata in C major (RV779) for the unusual *concertante* quartet of violin, oboe, chalumeau (the early clarinet) and organ obbligato (played delightfully by Giulia Nuti). Its autograph score (now in Dresden) even names the four women at the Ospedale della Pietà who played the piece when a new organ was installed in the chapel in late 1708 or early 1709.

Although much of Vivaldi's music was disseminated in manuscripts, during his lifetime 12 collections of chamber and orchestral music were published with opus numbers, although it is unlikely he had much to do with some sets cobbled together by printers in Amsterdam. Violinist **Federico Guglielmo** directs superb interpretations of the 'Complete Concertos & Sonatas, Opp 1-12' – apparently the first time such a project has been undertaken coherently and with some scholarly rigour; Opp 1-3, 6 and 7 are credited as using new critical editions published by the Istituto Italiano Antonio Vivaldi in Venice.

Anyone familiar with L'Arte dell'Arco's previous recordings for CPO, Chandos and DHM will not be surprised that

these are expert performances by players whose consummate engagement with this fantastic music is obvious. The variations on 'La follia' in the Trio Sonata Op 1 No 12 (1705) are played with as much visceral brio as it is humanly possible to pack into it. Guglielmo and his continuo trio play with lyrical sophistication in the Op 2 violin sonatas (1709), and L'Arte dell'Arco's imaginatively detailed *L'estro armonico* (Op 3, 1711) has a conversational transparency, theatrical verve with rhythms and conjuring of kaleidoscopic moods that are as rewarding as any of the other best versions in the catalogue.

La stravaganza (Op 4, 1716) is interpreted without the slightest whiff of complacency and *Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'invenzione* (Op 8, 1725) commences with a refreshingly spontaneous *Four Seasons*. Nevertheless, among so many string concertos, it is welcome respite to hear Mario Folena's fluent playing of the Op 10 flute concertos (c1729), including an impersonation of a musically prodigious goldfinch in *Il gardellino* (RV428).

There's also buoyant chirruping aplenty in an album of Recorder Concertos played by the Swedish virtuoso **Dan Laurin**, who revisits several works he recorded previously for BIS with different Baroque

bands. This zesty collaboration with the Norwegian ensemble 1B1 (shorthand for Ensemble Bjergsted 1 – a central district of Stavanger) involves Laurin playing a variety of sopranino, soprano and alto recorders. His technical musicianship and intelligent variety of phrasing are stupendous, and there is also humour: he compares his own playing in the first movement of RV443 to the comical effect of ‘a belligerent chihuahua lacking all awareness of its diminutive size’. On the other hand, the use of a maple alto recorder for RV442 has a gentler pastoral charm.

An hour or more of wall-to-wall Vivaldi concertos featuring an identical solo instrument has a valuable kind of concentrated appeal but there is something to be said for mixing things up a bit with the aim of textural variety. This is exactly what we get from *Les Violons du Roy* conducted by **Mathieu Lussier**. The band play on modern instruments with Baroque bows, and their classy musicianship means that one seldom notices that these exciting performances are not played on period instruments: one rare instance is the rock-steady trumpets pumping along in RV537 without the shaded unevenness that their historical counterparts would naturally possess.

Two concertos from *L'estro armonico* are interspersed among colourfully diverse concertos Vivaldi sent to Pisendel in Dresden. In particular, RV577 is played joyously, with spectacular braying horns, immaculately contoured violin, and harmonic richness provided by the supporting *concertante* recorders, oboes and bassoon. Much though I enjoyed the erudite refinement of *L'Arte dell'Arco* and Dan Laurin's flexibility and vitality, the hand-picked miscellanies confected by *Modo Antiquo* and *Les Violons du Roy* cultivate the variety Vivaldi has to offer. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Vivaldi 'The Young Vivaldi'
Ens *Modo Antiquo* / Sardelli
DHM © 88875 12785-2



Vivaldi Complete Opp 1-12
L'Arte dell'Arco / Guglielmi
Brilliant © (20 discs) 95200



Vivaldi Recorder Concertos
Laurin; 1B1 / Bjøranger
BIS © BIS2035



Vivaldi Concertos
Les Violons du Roy / Lussier
ATMA Classique © ACD2 2602

incorporating an Ute tobacco song, technological innovations (wagons, fibre internet connections) and 90-year-old graffiti etched next to a petroglyph. But the music is less interesting than the blurb. Opening flutes and harps are shattered by jutting heavy brass – maybe Muhly still remembers John Adams's comment that ‘at times there is a surfeit of prettiness in Nico's music’. But prettiness wins out in the ecstatic chimes and chattering winds of ‘Mountain’ (‘insect-like punctuations’) and in the pert interlocking rhythms of ‘Beehive’ (‘morse-code-like’). The Muhly formula of bright sounds doing busy things, dark sounds doing rousing things and momentum driven forward by swells and crescendos begins to wear thin by the final movement.

So the rush of unchecked energy and invention in Andrew Norman's *Switch* comes as a thrill. This 30-minute span features an ultra-alert Colin Currie and is also where you'll find the finest orchestral playing of the collection: Fischer keeps Norman's colours super-bright, his pinball rhythms bouncy and tight, and the ensemble responds with impressive nimbleness – the winds and brass have a gloss and gusto that set textures ablaze. There's a brilliantly elastic sense of play between soloist and orchestra, with every percussion instrument setting off a fun reaction in some part of the orchestra. One of my favourite moments comes when a choir of high winds breaks away from the throng and ascends up and up as if unstoppable for the sheer joy of it.

Kate Molleson

'Horizon 7'

G Benjamin *Dream of the Song* **M Lindberg** *Era* **Rijnvos** *fuoco e fumo* **Tan Dun** *The Wolf* **Bejun Mehta** *countertenor* **Dominic Seldis** *db* **Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra** / **George Benjamin**, **Daniel Harding**, **David Robertson**, **Tan Dun** RCO Live (F) RCO16003 (75' • DDD/DSD • T/t) Recorded live, ^aJanuary 17 & 18, 2013; ^dJanuary 29 & 30, ^eJune 12, ^fSeptember 25 & 26, 2015



Here's the second recording of Magnus Lindberg's *Era* to be issued this year. The piece was written for the RCO, designed for its hall's acoustic and conceived as a celebration of its orchestral brilliance. With that in mind, I was holding my breath reviewing Hannu Lintu's spiky, disciplined studio recording, knowing this was on the way. The RCO's approach under David Robertson is softer, warmer (though not hotter) and apparently concerned more with

the work's elements of nostalgia than with its references to Sibelius's Fourth. It feels a little standoffish. Stick to Lintu.

But – and it's a big but – the true wonder of the RCO's 'Horizon' series is in the sonic journey each record presents. And you'll want to hear George Benjamin's *Dream of the Song*, especially in this almost creepily perfect performance from Bejun Mehta. The six songs for countertenor, women's chorus and small orchestra set varying texts with roots in Granada and were composed in the wake of *Written on Skin*. That shows in the teetering sensuality of Benjamin's writing, often so close to slipping from eroticism into catastrophe. The solo vocal writing has a smoky, coiled lyricism and the orchestra is endlessly terse and reactive, somehow more tangible in its introspection than in its moments of protest. The string-writing at the start of 'The Gazelle' and the high horn, celesta, harp and women's voices that introduce 'My heart thinks as the sun comes up' make you long to see the score.

Particularly enlivening is Benjamin's tendency to play at the hinterlands of his orchestra, to have isolated corners of the ensemble collapse into panic without disrupting the meta-flow. In Richard Rijnvos's reflection on the night La Fenice was destroyed by fire, *fuoco e fumo*, there's one micro-narrative and it's right in the foreground, underpinned by an almost constant B natural. We hear the immense strain as the structure falters, buckles and collapses. Highly focused and highly effective.

Tan Dun's double bass concerto *The Wolf* was commissioned by five symphony orchestras for their respective section principals to play. The first to get a stab at it – under the composer's baton – was the RCO's Dominic Seldis. Soloists have to master fingering techniques from the ancient traditions of China and Mongolia as the concerto tells of the Mongols' sacred animal, the wolf, and its attachment to its mother (a metaphor for human interaction with the planet). Other than that, the concerto is ultra-traditional: fast outer movements in which material is passed from ensemble to soloist and back, and a slow movement – the work's heart – in which the bass drapes a long song over pizzicato strings and floating winds. Some tokenistic genre tourism, some moments of depth, but an astute complement to the other music presented here and breathtaking, chameleonic playing from Seldis that tells you why he's this incredible orchestra's principal. **Andrew Mellor**

Lindberg – selected comparison:

Finnish RSO, Lintu (3/16) (ONDI) ODE1281-5

Chopin's Fourth Ballade

Pianist **Imogen Cooper** explores a towering masterpiece of the repertoire with Hugo Shirley

It's extraordinarily puzzling,' says Imogen Cooper of the opening of Chopin's Fourth Ballade. 'I adore starting this work almost more than any other, but I have no idea what it's about: I don't understand these first three lines,' she admits, before adding a telling qualification: 'and I'm glad I don't understand them, because I think they set us in a very magical atmosphere of disquiet, of searching which actually continues in bar 8 as the main theme starts.'

'It's quite extraordinary to start a main theme *mezza voce*,' she adds, trying to find the words to describe its twisting and turning chromaticism. 'There are almost as many semitones in here as there are in *Tristan*! All these leave one slightly disorientated. And rhythmically: there are so many hemiolas.'

It might have taken Cooper – a veteran of the studio in Schubert, Mozart and Schumann – a while to record her first Chopin disc, but there's nothing timid about her choices for her first record of the great Polish composer's works. Beside the 1842 Fourth Ballade – 'by common consent one of Chopin's masterpieces,' *Grove* says unequivocally, 'and one of the masterpieces of 19th-century piano music in general' – there is a handful of Nocturnes plus a clutch of further undisputed masterpieces: the First Ballade, the *Polonaise-fantaisie* and the *Berceuse*.

At first Cooper seems a little apprehensive about articulating her thoughts on the work in question. As the conversation gets underway, though, she speaks with quiet consideration, her words clearly offering just a glimpse of the deep thought processes and reflection that inform her approach to the piece. What becomes very clear as we work through the score, charting the subtle variations of its interlocking themes as they build towards one of the most exciting climaxes in the piano literature, is that I'm going to have enough material to fill many more pages than I've been allowed.

There won't be room for our discussion of period Pleyels and Erards, as opposed to the modern Steinway (Cooper says she learnt a great deal from having a go on a Pleyel a decade or so ago); or for our brief comparison of the Paderewski edition the pianist was brought up on and Henle-Verlag's



Imogen Cooper includes the Fourth Ballade on her first recording of Chopin

Urtext Edition, a copy of which she bought to give her a fresh start for this project (Cooper is aghast at Paderewski's 'chutzpah' in marking a right-hand *crescendo* from the first bar: if she'd been editing it wrongly, she says with a laugh, she'd have done it differently). And it's almost a relief that we're let off the hook regarding the discussion of the piece's 'narrative', now that most scholars agree that the link, usually ascribed to Schumann and repeated to this day, between the piece and the work of Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz is at best unproven. The heritage of the Ballade as a poetic form is important, however, Cooper notes, even if the narrative she loosely applies to this Ballade in particular is abstract: 'in broad brushstrokes, about life, love, fear, joy, tenderness, humour.'

Interpretatively the piece offers enough challenges, and she locates one of these in the need to balance its purely pianistic charms – what makes it such a staple in the conservatoires –



The historical view

Frederick Niecks
Scholar (1845–1924)

'The emotional keynote of the piece is longing sadness...The variations of the principal subject are more emphatic restatements of it; the first is more impressive than the original, the second more eloquently beseeching.'

James Huneker
Critic (1857–1921)

'It is a masterpiece in piano literature as the *Mona Lisa* and *Madame Bovary* are masterpieces in painting and prose. Its melody, which probes the very coverts of the soul, is haunting in its chromatic colouring.'

John Ogdon
Pianist (1937–89)

'It is the most exalted, intense and sublimely powerful of all Chopin's compositions...It is unbelievable that it lasts only 12 minutes, for it contains the experience of a lifetime.'


with structural discipline. Cooper's own relationship with the piece goes back to her student years at the Paris Conservatoire, and she's only returned to it a couple of times in the intervening years, she admits. 'It's just this time around that I thought to myself maybe I really have something to say.' Part of that clearly involves acknowledging those mistakes borne of the impetuosity of youth, to think equally about structure: 'I hope that it's gained in expressiveness so that the feel of Edwin Fischer's "die grosse Linie" – the long line – is audible from the beginning of the work to the end.'

As we return to the first pages, I suggest that we don't really have any sense of where the piece is going or what it's doing. 'It's quite a small circular world,' she agrees, 'searching, plangent, a bit wistful. You don't really get an inkling until the second subject, as far as I'm concerned, when he takes us into a completely different key: *misterioso, pianissimo*.' As the conversation extends further through the piece, it traces a pattern of expectations raised and confounded, and in some ways following a trajectory similar to that of the piece itself, building momentum as these ever-developing episodes pile into one another. It's a matter of 'taking on muscle and complexity of argument', in Cooper's words, and she offers telling descriptions, mixing musical insight with poetic interpretation, of each episode.

'You don't really get an inkling until the second subject, when he takes us into a completely different key'

One 'almost feels like one of the scherzos' (of the section starting at bar 100); another offers 'introspection of a very different sort' (the section, beginning bar 109, with the twisting right-hand sixths). The return of the first theme in something like D major (at bar 129) 'makes more sense here than it does at the beginning, probably because we've heard it already,' she says. 'But also because of the sudden switch from the extrovert to the introvert: it's less searching, it's quite simply *dolce* and tender here. After a *dolcissimo* sort of garland [bar 134], there's more frustration of any sense of momentum: you're suddenly back in all of this again and in both hands.'

She describes as 'Bachian' that canonic weaving, hands an octave and a bar apart, which melts back into something reminiscent of the first pages with an A flat in the left hand (the final beat of bar 145) – 'one of the most wonderful moments of the piece to play, because somehow it's opening up towards a theme that again has been changed by everything that has been before. And again you're in a wonderful key – D flat major, or circulating around it – and all this makes you feel that you're at home, and that you're safer than you were at the beginning.'

'But hey, guess what? The question mark again!' The pages that lead up to the coda, taking us through elaborated guises of the first theme and, especially, unprecedented development of the second subject, she describes as 'like a pressure cooker that's just about to go'. But she emphasises the need to 'hold the tension until it gets to that 6/4 chord,' the thundering interrupted cadence at bar 202. 'And then the coda? My goodness, it's one of the most complex bits of writing Chopin ever did. You just imagine him composing it on a Pleyel – he must have almost broken the darn thing!' 

► Read our review of 'Imogen Cooper's Chopin' on page 63



Sorel Classics is proud to present a new recording of Sergei Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No.1, in D flat, Op.10 and Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 16 (SC CD006), performed by pianist Anna Shelest, with the Janacek Philharmonic Orchestra, Niels Muus, conductor

annashelest.com



Hailed by The New York Times as a pianist of "a fiery sensibility and warm touch", Anna Shelest is an international award-winning pianist who has thrilled the audiences throughout the world. Her recent engagements include debuts at Alice Tully Hall in New York City, Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall in New York City, The Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and the Wiener Konzerthaus in Austria.

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Chamber



Charlotte Gardner on Baroque premieres from Ensemble Diderot:

'This disc is an absolute winner, Meister's music shining in the warm, zingy and sweet playing' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 54**



Richard Bratby on two releases featuring Martha Argerich:

'Barenboim lays down the framework while Argerich softens the edges, teases at the music, subverts it.' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 56**

Adès • Dutilleux • Ravel

Adès Arcadiana **Dutilleux** Ainsi la nuit

Ravel String Quartet

Varèse Quartet

NoMadMusic © NMM033 (66' • DDD)



Time was that Ravel's String Quartet went with Debussy's on disc the way Mendelssohn's

Violin Concerto went with Bruch's. The Belcea Quartet's debut recording back in 2001 added Dutilleux's *Ainsi la nuit* to that classic coupling, and now the first release by Quatuor Varèse – four graduates of the Conservatoire National in Lyon – pairs the Ravel and Dutilleux with Thomas Adès's *Arcadiana*, in a wonderfully satisfying way.

The first thing to say is that Quatuor Varèse play exquisitely. For a quick taste of their sound, try the Ravel's second movement from about 1'50". The quiet, searching interplay of the inner parts, the delicate suggestion of a waltz rhythm, the tangy bite of pizzicato violin – this is an ensemble that matches a vast range of tonal colour to a sensitive and vivid musical imagination. NoMadMusic has captured them in a near-ideal chamber acoustic: enough bloom to sound attractive but close enough to feel the physicality of fingers on strings.

And the interpretations are charged with a real sense of fantasy. These players' Dutilleux is freer and more impulsive than the Belceas', finding everything from the softest veils of sound to (in the second Nocturne) lurid showers of sparks. They hint at Adès's pastiches and parodies rather than playing them up: their tender, hesitant way with Adès's 'Nimrod'-inspired sixth movement is very different from the Calder Quartet's richer approach, but I found it genuinely moving; likewise the slight reticence that underlies the first three movements of their Ravel before finding release in an explosive finale.

Ignore the cover photo that makes them look like a bunch of nightclub bouncers

and indulge the faintly loopy Franglais booklet-notes. This is a magical debut from a quartet that's clearly going places.

Richard Bratby

Ravel, Dutilleux – selected comparison:

Belcea Qt (4/01) (EMI) 574020-2

Adès – selected comparison:

Calder Qt (6/15) (SIGN) SIGCD413

Brahms • Bruce

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115

Bruce Gumboots

Julian Bliss c/ **Carducci Quartet**

Signum © SIGCD448 (58' • DDD)



Here's a double delight. First, an engaging new work which deserves a place

in the chamber repertoire; second, a passionate account of Brahms's Clarinet Quintet which can hold its head high against starrer competition. British clarinetist Julian Bliss is forging a notable international career and is joined here by the Carducci Quartet, whose Shostakovich last year (in concert and on disc) impressed me hugely.

Gumboots is by David Bruce (whose terrific new opera *Nothing* premiered at Glyndebourne recently). Its title derives from gumboot dancing – a type of secret communication developed by black miners in Apartheid South Africa, where the slapping of boots and chains in the flooded mines turned into a sort of dance. A long, tranquil opening movement gives way to five short, incredibly catchy dances. Doubling bass clarinet, Bliss is in his element, each dance strongly rhythmic, with a distinctive folk feel. The performers' sense of fun is palpable.

In the Brahms, Bliss's tone isn't quite as opulent as Andreas Ottensamer or Martin Fröst on their recent recordings but it's firm and rounded, with a fruity chalumeau register. Where Ottensamer and Fröst team up with celebrity string partners (Janine Jansen, Leonidas Kavakos, Antoine

Tamestit and Maxim Rysanov among the line-ups), Bliss benefits from a string quartet used to playing together day in, day out. There is an abrasive, almost wiry quality to the Carducci Quartet's playing which I wasn't sure would be well suited to Brahms, but I enjoyed their drive and commitment enormously. They inject a much greater sense of purpose into their account, especially in the *Adagio*, which can turn into a wallow elsewhere. Bliss relishes the Hungarian folk-inspired riffs here (tr 8, 2'59"), bringing an improvisatory feel to his playing. There's vivacious joy in the *Presto non assai* section of the third movement and the finale maintains momentum – in every movement, Bliss and the Carducci are swifter than Ottensamer and Fröst. For forthright Brahms and a toe-tapping new work, this is strongly recommended.

Mark Pullinger

Brahms – selected comparisons:

Fröst et al (7/14) (BIS) BIS2063

Ottensamer et al (6/15) (DG) 481 1409DH

Butler

Dirty Beasts^a. **Down-Hollow Winds**^b. **Fall**^c. **Lovesongs Waltzes**^d. **Preludes inégales**^e. **Rondes d'automne**^f. **Rumba Machine**^g

^a**Simon Callow** narr ^c**Robert Manasse** fl ^d**Neyire**

Ashworth cl ^b**Leon Bosch** db ^e**Martin Butler** pf

^fmembers of the **Navarra Quartet**; ^g**New London**

Chamber Ensemble

NMC © NMCD212 (78' • DDD)



Plenty of new music has pretensions it can't sustain. Not so Martin Butler's. His output

comes close to post-minimalism yet there's no tendency to inflation or bombast and the harmonic language is clear and clean in a way that suggests American and French music from the middle of the last century – Stravinsky and even Debussy continue to loom large. Butler also has a real sense of humour. Listeners who find works for actor and ensemble intrinsically anomalous (and



Julian Bliss joins the Carducci Quartet for a coupling of Brahms and Bruce on Signum

may blench at the prospect of three macabre verses by Roald Dahl treated to a 'modern' musical backdrop) will find no sense of condescension or complexification here. Simon Callow is splendid as the narrator and the New London Chamber Ensemble play with verve and commitment. *Dirty Beasts* should entertain children of all ages. I just wish there were more of them. The three 'settings' of 'The Pig', 'The Tummy Beast' and 'The Crocodile' are not new and last only eight minutes in total. Their revival now celebrates the writer's centenary.

Next up is a delightful wind quintet, *Down-Hollow Winds*, in which the harmonic and rhythmic wellspring is folksier and pentatonic; there's one Ligeti-ish movement, again nothing to frighten the horses. A clutch of accessible piano pieces reflects Butler's facility at the keyboard – he's an enthusiastic improviser as well. While I was less taken with the whimsical *Lovesongs Waltzes* for clarinet and piano (the title itself a Brahmsian in-joke), the closing item, a nonet entitled *Rondes d'automne* (a Debussian allusion), builds something more resonant from its deceptively simple descending idea.

NMC provides expert sound and erudite accompanying notes. That said, the music

has such immediacy, charm and fluency that, for once, the annotations aren't essential reading: many listeners will be content to dispense with analysis and go with the flow. This is 'new music' but not quite as we know it.

David Gutman

Costanzi · Sollima

Costanzi Cello Sonatas – in B flat; in C minor; in F; in G; in G minor. **Sonatas for Two Cellos** – in C; in F **Sollima Il mandataro**

Giovanni Sollima, *Monika Leskovar VCS

Arianna Art Ensemble

Glossa © GCD923801 (73' • DDD)



'Giovanni del Violoncello' was the contemporary nickname awarded

to the now-forgotten 18th-century Italian cellist-composer Giovanni Battista Costanzi (1704-78), giving us an idea of the reputation he enjoyed in Rome as a household musician for Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, Vivaldi's famous patron. Another illuminating informational titbit is the fact that he taught Luigi Boccherini. However, neither of these contextual nuggets is

mentioned in the almost opaquely academic notes to this premiere recording of seven of his cello sonatas, which seems a shame, but the musical programme itself is truly engrossing, and cellist Giovanni Sollima should be applauded for his decision to investigate, and essentially rescue, these works.

Joined by fellow cellist Monika Leskovar and the Arianna Art Ensemble, Sollima presents five solo sonatas with continuo and two for two cellos. Their composition date is unclear, but the real take-home point is that Costanzi clearly wasn't known as 'John of the Cello' for nothing, because the stylistic and virtuosic variety is extraordinary to the point of feeling experimental: think surprise dynamic shifts, frequent high-register writing, rapid runs and broken-chord passages; technical effects such as swoops, flourishes, and dropping the bow on the strings and letting it bounce. The G minor Sonata's *Allegro* showcases pretty much all of the above over the course of a mere four minutes.

The (studio) recording itself captures all the above with a vivid sense of immediacy. Engineering-wise, the solo cellos are right up-close. Performance-wise, the tone produced by Sollima on his 18th-century Venetian instrument has a slightly 'dirty'

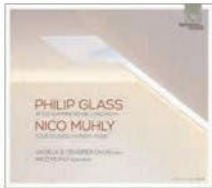
quality, heavy on energetic panache, which perhaps won't appeal to everyone but is certainly dispatched with wizardly skill. The recital then ends with a fun new work by Sollima himself, inspired by Costanzi and melding the most colourful elements of Baroque style with contemporary harmonic freedom. **Charlotte Gardner**

Glass • Muhly

Glass *In the Summer House*. *Mad Rush*

Muhly *Four Studies*. *Honest Music*

Angela and Jennifer Chun *vns* **Nico Muhly** *pf/kybd*
 Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7599 (57 • DDD)



Philip Glass may have studied with two of the 20th century's most revered teachers

– Vincent Persichetti and Nadia Boulanger – but he never fancied the role of pedagogue for himself. Nevertheless, he has become something of a mentor for a number of younger composers, including Nico Muhly, who served a kind of compositional apprenticeship as Glass's assistant for almost 10 years. It therefore seems appropriate that they should be paired together on this disc of music for two violins.

Muhly's music is no cheap Glass imitation, however. For a start, the musical frame of reference is wider and more stylistically diverse. Also, unlike Glass, Muhly is fond of employing drones in his music, whereas in Glass they appear as psychoacoustic by-products of the combined individual lines. *Four Studies* sees Muhly exploring territory initially covered on 'Drones' (Bedroom Community, 2012); but whereas his approach on the previous album was largely exploratory and improvisatory, the material seems more fixed and deliberately 'composed' in *Four Studies*. The element of surprise may be lacking but Angela and Jennifer Chun's violin lines are interwoven around shimmering drones generated by Muhly on piano and keyboard to create effective soundscapes. It takes courage and confidence to leave out so much. There's a static quality about *Honest Music* (2002), too, although the musical colours are more monochrome here, the mood darker and more pervasive, and the brushstrokes broader.

Glass's *Mad Rush* (1979) was originally performed by the composer on organ and has since been played on piano and even harp. The version heard here for two violins (prepared by Alexandra du Bois) is given a far less bombastic treatment than on any number of piano recordings. As in the less familiar incidental music supplied

by Glass for a production of Jane Bowles's play *In the Summer House* (1993), the Chun duo's sensitive and delicate playing imparts at times ethereal and transcendental qualities to the music which, one suspects, in the case of *Mad Rush*, is more in keeping with the spirit of the Dalai Lama, for whom it was written. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Godard

Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 1; No 2, Op 2; No 3, Op 9; No 4, Op 12

Nicolas Dautricourt *vn* **Dana Ciocarlie** *pf*
 Aparté © AP124 (88 • DDD)



Benjamin Godard trained as a violinist before turning to composition. Though

he soon expressed a marked preference as a performer for the viola, many of his early works were written for his original instrument, including four sonatas, composed between 1866 and 1872. As a set they are uneven, and modern taste, I suspect, may well overturn the judgement of his contemporaries, who preferred the Fourth to the other three.

Hearing them together you inevitably notice stylistic points in common: an operatic approach to slow movements, which sound like *bel canto* arias without words; a debt to Mendelssohn in scherzos or intermezzos; and an emphasis on expressive passagework rather than double- or triple-stopping at moments of climax or crisis. Yet the differences are also considerable. The first pair were completed contemporaneously in 1867, and the Second, taut yet passionate, with not a note wasted, reveals considerable advances over its companion, where the thematic material can be unremarkable and Godard's fondness for extended passages in octaves becomes a mannerism. The Third (1869), written for the piano-playing Princesse de Chimay and her violinist husband, has been dismissed as salon music, but the consistently striking quality of its thematic material and the exquisite writing for both instruments stand comparison with Fauré: many, I suspect, will nowadays prefer it to the Fourth, a grand virtuoso showstopper, which at times sounds curiously like a concerto performed with piano reduction.

The performances are consistently strong. Nicolas Dautricourt permits himself to be flamboyant in the Fourth but is nicely restrained elsewhere, his phrasing immaculately shaded: a touch of metal in his tone prevents the music from turning towards sentimentality, an all too

frequent danger with Godard in performance. Dana Ciocarlie is superb throughout, poised yet intense, and wonderfully limpid in the Third Sonata, its arpeggiated figurations done with breathtaking delicacy. The recording itself is as warm and clear as one could wish.

Tim Ashley

Górecki • Korndorf

'Whispers of Titans'

Górecki *Genesis I*, Op 19 No 1

Korndorf *In Honour of Alfred Schnittke* (AGSCH)
Goeyvaerts String Trio

Challenge Classics © CC72713 (48 • DDD)



His Symphony No 3 propelled him to chart-topping stardom, thanks to its

beatific, anaesthetising simplicity. Now whenever Henryk Górecki gets a mention, it's often in the same breath as Arvo Pärt and John Tavener – those notorious purveyors of 'holy minimalism'.

What, then, to make of *Genesis I: elementi per tre archi*, Op 19 No 1, the opener on the Goeyvaerts String Trio's new disc of 20th-century Polish works? Dating from 1962, this scrabbling and violent one-movement work is early Górecki, but it's also typical Górecki – more so, at any rate, than that Third Symphony. He wrote it just after his return from Paris, where he had made contact with Boulez and other *enfants terribles* of musical modernism, and in it attempted to lay out a new type of composition. What emerged was music moulded not from notes but from noise and an artillery of extended playing techniques: no picnic, then, for either players or listeners, but original for its time. In this brave and uncompromising performance, the Goeyvaerts certainly make it snarl.

Then, by way of a peace offering, they play *In Honour of Alfred Schnittke* written, in 1986, by the little-known composer Nikolai Korndorf. For lovers of the Tavener-Pärt aesthetic, it's like stepping into a warm bath. The first movement, heavily influenced by medieval chant, proceeds through whispering, circling chords. The folk-inflected second passes chugging semiquaver figurations between instruments and yet unfolds at the same stately pace as the first. The third is more unsettling, appearing to grasp desperately at tonality – a goal that gets progressively further out of reach. None of it, despite the work's title, overtly references Schnittke's music but it shares the same spiritual outlook. Here, focused by the Goeyvaerts'



David Matthews with members of the Villiers Quartet, who have recorded his Piano Quintet with pianist Martin Cousin (review page 54)


clear and impeccably balanced playing, it comes across with poise. **Hannah Nepil**

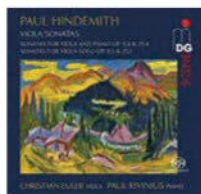
Hindemith

Viola Sonatas - Op 11 No 4; Op 25 No 4.

Solo Viola Sonatas - Op 11 No 5; Op 25 No 1

Christian Euler *va* **Paul Rivinius** *pf*

Dabringhaus und Grimm (F)  MDG903 1952-6 (69' • DDD/DSD)



Dabringhaus und Grimm served Hindemith's sonatas well in the mid-1990s

with a seven-volume survey of 31 of them by Ensemble Villa Musica (nla). Although marketed as 'complete' it was not: at least six sonatas – including Op 11 No 5 for unaccompanied viola featured on Christian Euler's new disc – plus various alternative versions were never issued.

Euler and pianist Paul Rivinius enter a rather more competitive field than did Enrique Santiago, Villa Musica's viola player. True, Kashkashian's and Imai's superb recordings were available but since then we have had full surveys of the seven sonatas – three with piano, four without – by the likes of Cortese, Power and, best of

all and most recently, Tabea Zimmermann, as well as some brilliant individual accounts from Hosprová and Sanzo. Any newcomer has to be special indeed to thrive in such a market.

Euler and Rivinius perform the first four sonatas, written between 1919 and 1922, and their strong accounts are not embarrassed by comparisons. Euler has a warm, rich tone not far from Cortese's – as can be heard in the opening of Op 11 No 4 – but his playing has more steel than the American's; his view of the unaccompanied sonatas is more compelling than Weber's, akin to Hosprová's. In Rivinius he has a fine partner in Op 11 No 4 and Op 25 No 4, no less supportive than Crawford-Phillips for Power or Hoppe for Zimmermann. If these new accounts do not displace the best (still Zimmermann's, with Power's a fine alternative), they are still recommendable. MDG's sound is clear, the acoustic natural. Hopefully the later three sonatas (written between 1923 and 1939) will follow on in due course. **Guy Rickards**

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Kashkashian, Levin (10/88) (ECM) 833 309-2

Zimmermann, Hoppe (5/14) (MYRI) MYR011

Unaccompanied Sonatas – selected comparisons:

Imai (6/93) (BIS) BIS-CD571

Power (5/10) (HYPER) CDA67769

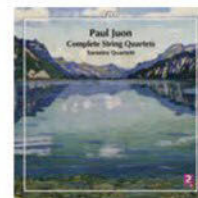
Juon

'Complete String Quartets'

String Quartets - Op 5; Op 11; Op 29; Op 67

Sarastro Quartet

CPO (F) ② CPO777 883-2 (130' • DDD)



Paul Juon (1872-1940) enjoyed a brief vogue in *Gramophone* during the 1930s thanks to a

set of the Chamber Symphony (1907) for eight players, which was the last recording made by the National Gramophonic Society label launched by Compton Mackenzie as a complement to the magazine. 'Though modern,' remarked Mackenzie, it is 'not so modern as to make it impossible for simple creatures like myself to follow it.'

Readers were still more enthusiastic in the correspondence columns. 'My idea of a perfect piece of chamber music,' wrote one such, and their modern counterparts may echo a diluted version of that sentiment (rather than Mackenzie's, perhaps) when listening to these spirited and carefully prepared performances of the four quartets. The fruits of Juon's training with Taneyev are evident throughout in writing that

understands each voice of the quartet; so too is a conservatism that turned Stefan Wolpe and Kurt Weill away from Juon and towards his colleague Busoni at the Berlin Hochschule.

The Op 5 Quartet makes the best possible introduction, with a bold five-movement structure enclosing sticky melodies and a pathos-laden *Adagio*. Op 11 was written earlier and is more heavily reliant on imitative sequences and an effusive, hand-me-down Romantic language. The two later quartets move an inch or two towards their times. Indeed, the first movement of Op 67 gropes its way towards the chromatic labyrinth of Schoenberg's Op 7 before, perhaps wisely, giving up the effort and retreating back to Taneyev and late Brahms, spiced in the Scherzo and finale by folk-like drones and tunes.

CPO's booklet material is essential reading: a journal-length essay on composer and works by that indefatigable seeker of musical curios, Eckhardt van den Hoogen, whose intellectual convolutions are dauntlessly translated by Susan Marie Praeder. The Swiss radio recording is close but not too boxy, picking up vestigial sniffs and a broad resonance from the cellist. The Sarastro Quartet play with conviction, as though these unfamiliar works have been well bedded in, just as they did for their previous, no less impressive CPO set of the quartets by another Brahmsian epigone, Felix Weingartner. **Peter Quantrill**

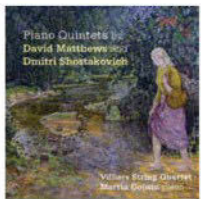
D Matthews · Shostakovich

D Matthews Piano Quintet, Op 92

Shostakovich Piano Quintet, Op 57

Martin Cousin *pf* **Villiers Quartet**

Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0157 (52' • DDD)



David Matthews's Piano Quintet is modest both in dimensions and in ambitions: the titles of its four movements – Praeludio, Tango, Ciaconna and Canto – suggest a suite, and they add up to just over 20 minutes. For a piece composed in 2004 the style is also remarkably backward-looking. Notwithstanding the Italian movement designations, there is a clear debt to English pastoralism, most noticeably in the gently flowing Prelude (Elgar's Quintet is somewhere in the background here). The more extrovert Tango, though undeniably attractive and rather cutely concluded in mid-air, is still essentially a decorous take on such a potentially fiery genre; and while the

Chaconne clearly echoes the fourth movement of Shostakovich's Quintet, its passions are again fundamentally restrained. Inspired by the bell-ringing of an Italian convent, the finale promises much but ultimately pulls up short, as if fearful of excess.

The coupling with the Shostakovich Quintet makes a lot of sense but it also leaves both Matthews and the players exposed to invidious comparisons. While there is much to commend in the playing, especially in the clarity of the Scherzo (despite a bad misreading, or rather an accurate reading of a bad misprint, at 0'31") and the effective characterisation of the finale, the Prelude feels a little dogged, the Fugue could do with more expressive profile and there is some disturbing strain to the string lines throughout. Recorded sound is only fair – the piano looms rather bulkily in places and the acoustic is on the dry side. **David Fanning**

Meister

Il giardino del piacere – No 1;

No 3; No 7; No 8; No 9; No 12

Ensemble Diderot / Johannes Pramsohler

Audax © ADX13705 (66' • DDD)



Back in 2011, four years after Reinhard Goebel's Musica Antiqua Köln had disbanded, they issued a surprise new premiere recording of trio sonatas by the little-known 17th-century German composer Johann Friedrich Meister, from a 1695 collection entitled *Il giardino del piacere* (Berlin Classics). The sonatas had apparently been recorded in 2004 for a televised broadcast but then forgotten about, and they were an entertaining bundle: better described as suites given their multi-movement structure, they were stylistically varied with clear French and Italian influences, and indisputably worthy of resurrection beyond their sheer obscurity value. However, while Meister's collection was 12-strong, MAK had only recorded six.

So, fast forward five years, and the French-based period ensemble Ensemble Diderot (Johannes Pramsohler and Roldan Bernabe on violins, with cellist Gulrim Choi and harpsichordist Philippe Grisvard) have stepped in to complete the set, Goebel himself lending his blessing in the form of a booklet-note. They're a perfect fit for the job, too: not only have they been garnering a reputation for clever championing of neglected Baroque repertoire in recent

years, as typified by their 2015 release of Montanari violin concertos, but they also resemble MAK in the way in which they combine an elegant performance style with liveliness, warm tonal brilliance and razor-sharp definition.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, this disc is an absolute winner, Meister's music shining in the warm, zingy and sweet playing from Ensemble Diderot, subtle ornamentation adding elegant extra gloss. The opening A major Sonata's first movement sets the standard for the whole: an *Adagio* full of lovingly rendered dynamic swells, the tempo expansive but momentum-filled, which segues into a bright *Allegro presto* that slices the air with its crispness. The engineering is equally spot-on, instruments well balanced, with plenty of immediacy to the sound without going uncomfortably close. This and the earlier MAK recording make a super pairing. **Charlotte Gardner**

'Accordato'

Violin sonatas by Bertali, Biber, RI Mayr,

Schmelzer, Teubner and Viviani

Ars Antiqua Austria / Gunar Letzbor *vn*

Pan Classics © PC10334 (69' • DDD)

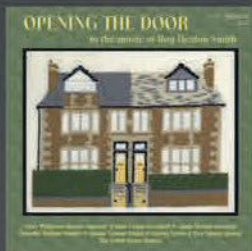


The Manuscript XIV 726 of the Minorite Monastery in Vienna is one of the most important sources of Austrian Baroque music, containing over 100 handwritten copies of violin sonatas and giving an intriguing snapshot into the stylistic musical melting pot that was 18th-century Vienna. Some of these sonatas are by famous names, while others are by lesser-known or anonymous writers. The common thread throughout, though, is their high virtuosity, and as such they've represented rich pickings for violinist Gunar Letzbor and Ars Antiqua Austria, resulting in their 'Ex Vienna' series of recordings. 'Accordato' presents attributable works that don't require retuning of the violin (that repertoire is on 'Scordato').

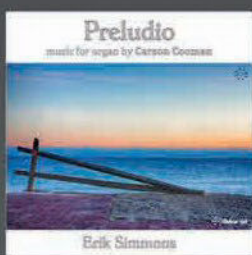
With such a lot of scholarly sifting underpinning these discs, it's a surprise that the overall package has as many informational holes as it has; the sonatas appear to be named after their manuscript order rather than by their actual name and basic composer dates are also missing, making this a potentially vexing experience for armchair scholars. However, the actual musical contents – mostly under-recorded repertoire, with the exception of the third sonata from Biber's 1681 solo sonata

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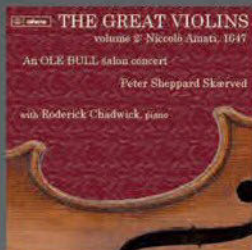


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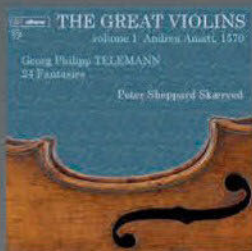


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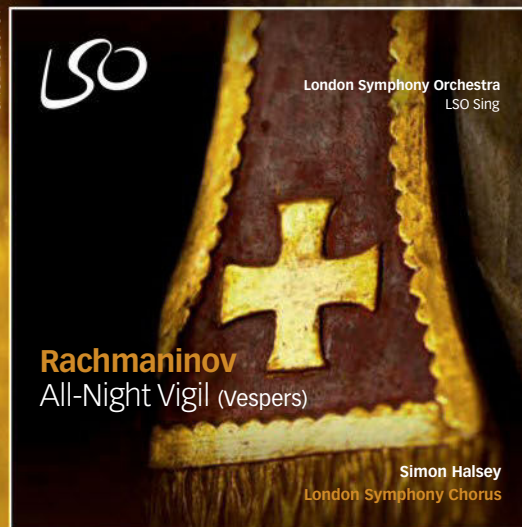
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collection (described here as No 9) – are a motley assortment in the best sort of a way; the disc opens with a sonata from Buonaventura Viviani (1638–c1693) that matches virtuosity with atmosphere. There's also a Capriccio from Antonio Bertali (c1605–69), and three sonatas by Rupert Ignaz Mayr (1646–1712). The majority feature organ accompaniment, while the lesser-heard *colascione* makes an appearance accompanying the aforementioned Biber sonata. Letzbor's playing style itself contrasts fast, *forte* passages in which he carves into his instrument with scratchy-tone-producing gung-ho abandon, with legato sections characterised by a fairly uniform but pleasing strong-toned sweetness. As such, it won't be for everyone, but it's certainly dramatic.

Charlotte Gardner


'Live from Lugano 2015'

Bacalov *Porteña*^a **Bartók** *Romanian Folk Dances*, Sz56 (arr Székely)^b **Brahms** *Clarinet Trio*, Op 114^c *Scherzo (F-A-E Sonata)*^d. *Viola (Horn) Trio*, Op 40^e **Debussy** *En blanc et noir*^f **Ginastera** *Estancia*, Op 8a – *Dances* (arr Griguoli)^g **Glass** *Les enfants terribles* – *Suite*^h **Poulenc** *Sonata for Two Pianos*ⁱ **Ries** *Piano Quintet*, Op 74^j **Schubert** *Variations*, D813^j **Schumann** *Six Canonic Etudes*, Op 56 (arr Debussy)^k **Turina** *Piano Trio No 2*, Op 76^{abjkl} **Martha Argerich** *pf* with ^aPaul Meyer *cl*¹ **Andrey Baranov**, ²Ilya Gringolts, ³Géza Hosszu-Legocky, ⁴Mayu Kishima, ⁵Alissa Margulis *vns* ⁶Nathan Braude, ⁷Lyda Chen *vas* ⁸Gautier Capuçon, ⁹Natalia Margulis, ¹⁰Jing Zhao *vcs* ¹¹Enrico Fagone *db* ¹²Nicholas Angelich, ¹³Carlo Maria Griguoli, ¹⁴Eduardo Hubert, ¹⁵Stephen Kovacevich, ¹⁶Karin Lechner, ¹⁷Jura Margulis, ¹⁸Alexander Mogilevsky, ¹⁹Akane Sakai, ²⁰Alessandro Stella, ²¹Sergio Tiempo, ²²Giorgia Tomassi, ²³Ilya Zilberstein *pfs* ^aSvizzera Italiana Orchestra / Alexander Vedernikov Warner Classics © ③ 2564 62854-9 (3h 39' • DDD) Recorded live, June 2015

'Piano Duos and Concert'

Beethoven *Piano Concerto No 1*^a **Bizet** *Carmen* – *Suite No 1*^b **Mores/Taboada** *El firulete*^b **Mozart** *Le nozze di Figaro* – *Overture*^b **Ravel** *Alborada del gracioso*^b. *Boléro*^b. *Pavane pour une infante défunte*^b. *Rapsodie espagnole*^b **Schumann** *Traumes Wirren*, Op 12 No 7^c ^a**Martha Argerich** *pf*^{ab} **West-Eastern Divan Orchestra** / **Daniel Barenboim**

Guastavino *Bailecito* **Milhaud** *Scaramouche* – *Brazilieria*^a **Mozart** *Sonata for Two Pianos*, K448 **Rachmaninov** *Suite No 2*, Op 17 – *Waltz* **Schubert** *Variations*, D813 **Schumann** *Andante and Variations*, Op 46 **Stravinsky** *The Rite of Spring* **Martha Argerich**, **Daniel Barenboim** *pfs* ^aJorge

Monte de Fez *hn* ^a**Linor Katz**, ^a**Kian Soltani** *vcs* EuroArts © ②  207 2818 (3h 46' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O) Recorded live at the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, August 2014



'As you can see, Martha and I are not alone,' announces Daniel Barenboim to a packed Teatro Colón as three members of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra pick their way through piles of confetti to join them for an encore. 'You are never alone here!' comes a shout from the audience. And neither Martha Argerich nor Barenboim is ever alone on either of these two releases: the CDs recorded live at Argerich's summer 2015 chamber music festival in Lugano and the DVDs at two concerts that the pair gave in Buenos Aires in August 2014 – their first-ever appearance together in the city of their birth.

The Lugano discs are part of an ongoing series: essentially an anthology of performances from the 2015 festival (Harriet Smith found the 2014 collection 'compelling' – 7/15). Argerich plays in only five out of the 13 works recorded. Still, who's complaining, with collaborators like Ilya Gringolts, Alexander Mogilevsky and Lilya Zilberstein? The latter two partner Argerich in limpid, songful accounts of (respectively) Schubert's *Variations*, D813, and Schumann's *Canonic Etudes* in Debussy's arrangement for two pianos.

Gringolts joins Mogilevsky and Nathan Braude for the viola version of Brahms's Horn Trio, and here I encountered my first misgiving: the big-room acoustic of Lugano's Auditorio Stelio Molo. In faithfully capturing the live sound, Brahms's domestic scale has been lost. The players, too, seem (understandably) to be playing to the audience rather than each other, losing something of the piece's chamber music quality as they do so. In the *Adagio mesto* – surely the most personal confession in all of Brahms's chamber music – that's a serious loss.

Similar reservations apply to an otherwise thoughtful Brahms Clarinet Trio with Paul Meyer, Gautier Capuçon and Nicholas Angelich. They're less of an issue in Turina's Ravel-like Second Piano Trio and Ferdinand Ries's Hummel-ish Piano Quintet, Op 74, which gets the performance of its life. Argerich's sole appearance on this second disc is an encore, but what an encore: Bartók's

Romanian Folk Dances with violinist Géza Hosszu-Legocky, by turns moody and positively incandescent.

The third disc is the quirkiest, and if you're after three-piano versions of Philip Glass's *Les enfants terribles* and Ginastera's *Estancia* dances you won't find more exuberantly colourful ones than these. The same goes for Luis Bacalov's tango-inspired double concerto *Porteña*: Argerich sounds like she's having a lot of fun, and Alexander Vedernikov's Swiss orchestra accompanies with flair. But Argerich's performance with Stephen Kovacevich of Debussy's *En blanc et noir* is a jewel: vivid, fantastic and free of the applause that follows some (but not all) works on the set, seemingly at random.

The applause is a big part of the experience on the double DVD of Argerich and Barenboim's two Buenos Aires concerts. It was filmed in front of an audience of 3000 in the huge, gilded auditorium of the Teatro Colón, and the electricity is tangible – not least in the alertness of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra's players as Barenboim, poker-faced, simply stands there and lets them play *Boléro* by themselves. That's the climax of a Ravel sequence that shows the WEDO's wind section to glorious effect; the main item, though, is a Beethoven First Piano Concerto in which Barenboim and his players define majestic outlines and their soloist – first with almost fortepiano-like briskness and clarity, and then with an ever deepening sense of poetry and wit – responds with something utterly Argerich.

It's fascinating to see how that same relationship continues into the duet recital on the second disc. Barenboim, generally playing the *primo* part, lays down the rhythmic framework while Argerich (with occasional gentle smiles) softens the edges, teases at the music, subverts it. That's a grossly oversimplified description of pianism of extraordinary intelligence, range and expressive power. Schubert's A flat *Variations* expand here to a heavenly 21 minutes: a deeper, more inward and (at the last) more Beethoven-like reading than in Lugano.

The main part of the programme matches Barenboim and Argerich's earlier concert in Berlin: David Thresher (10/14) noted how the Berlin audience quietly gasped at the end of the pair's spectacular *The Rite of Spring*. No chance of that in Argentina: they simply explode, whereupon Barenboim and Argerich launch into a good 35 minutes of encores, including a Schumann *Andante and Variations* that, for all its buzzing immediacy, actually feels more intimate in this vast theatre than some of the Lugano recordings. Plus you get to hear the cheers, and see the



Martha Argerich and Géza Hosszu-Legocky performing together at the Legano Festival

way the faces of the three young WEDO players glow with joy. No doubt about it, this was an occasion: a real homecoming gig. If you can ignore the listing errors on the first disc – the last two movements of *Rapsodie espagnole* are shown as *Alborada del gracioso*, while the *Alborada* is rolled on to a single track together with the *Pavane* – this set will give lasting pleasure.

Richard Bratby

'Bis'

Achron Hebrew Melody **Bartók-Szekely** Romanian Folk Dances **Brahms-Joachim** Hungarian Dance No 1 **Brahms-Kreisler** Hungarian Dance No 17 **Debussy-Roelens** Clair de lune **Debussy-Roques** La plus que lent **Gershwin-Heifetz** Three Preludes **Gluck-Kreisler** Mélodie **Kreisler** Liebesfreud. Liebeslied **Medtner-Heifetz** Fairy Tale, Op 20 No 1 **Rachmaninov-Press** Vocalise **Wagner-Wilhelmj** Albumblatt **Kerson Leong** *vn* **Philip Chiu** *pf*
Analekta © AN2 9160 (58' • DDD)



Hot on the heels of the astonishing Leonidas Kavakos and his unfashionable

programme of violin encores (Decca, 6/16) comes a second collection. This one of 13 titles (20 tracks) consists entirely of transcriptions, with the exceptions of Achron's *Hebrew Melody* and the two Kreisler bonbons, and is the first recording by 19-year-old Ottawa-born Kerson Leong. A multiple prize-winner in his native country and the Junior First Prize winner of the 2010 Menuhin Competition in Oslo, this young man clearly has a big future in front of him.

If multi-composer discs of short pieces and transcriptions seem to have fallen out of favour, so has the kind of heart-on-sleeve playing such as you encounter here, with its judicious use of portamento and a seductively silky tone that put me in mind of Mischa Elman. Leong is particularly effective in the long-drawn cantilenas of the famous 'Mélodie' from *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Gluck-Kreisler), 'Vocalise' (Rachmaninov-Press) and Wilhelmj's ecstatic version of Wagner's *Albumblatt*, all of which are invested with a beguiling vocal quality. It is this lyrical character that dominates (Leong is well served by the 'ex-Auer' Strad he had on loan for the recording), with none of the jaw-dropping acrobatics of Kavakos. In fact, when Leong does raise the temperature (and then only

by a few degrees – Brahms-Joachim *Hungarian Dance* No 1, Kreisler *Liebesfreud*), the microphone placement seems to change slightly so that he and the self-effacing Philip Chiu sound marginally more distant in the empty confines of Quebec's St Augustin-de-Mirabel church than they are in the more intimate pieces.

Analekta's booklet says nothing of the music but an interview with Kerson Leong reveals that his aim for his debut album is 'to balance flavours, to juxtapose lesser-known pieces with some that people would instantly recognise and could relate'. In its modest ambition, the disc succeeds admirably. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'Légende'

Bernstein Rondo for Lify **Enescu** Légende **Françaix** Sonatine **Gershwin** Someone to watch over me (arr Turrin) **Goedicke** Concert-étude (arr Dokshitzer) **Hindemith** Trumpet Sonata **Kern** The way you look tonight (arr Poster) **Martinů** Sonatine **Maxwell Davies** Farewell to Stromness (transc Balsom/Poster) **Poster/Balsom** The Thoughts of Dr May **Ravel** Sonatine – Menuet **Alison Balsom** *tp* **Tom Poster** *pf*
Warner Classics © 9029 59877-2 (61' • DDD)
Recorded live at St George's, Bristol, October 12-13, 2015.



Enescu's *Légende* gives its title to this album, and it sets the mood. It's too

serious to count as a lollipop but it's not exactly as weighty as the one really substantial piece here: Hindemith's powerful Sonata of 1939. The Hindemith, plus sonatinas by Françaix (typically concise) and Martinů anchor the programme. Around them are miniatures ranging from Kern and Gershwin transcriptions to that unlikely 'smooth classic', Maxwell Davies's *Farewell to Stromness*. There's even *The Thoughts of Dr May*, an enjoyably lush six-minute duo apparently written collaboratively by Balsom and Poster as a tribute to Queen guitarist Brian May.

In short, it seems to be a selection from Balsom and Poster's recital repertoire, and it's an attractive – if eclectic – one. You can tell these players enjoy each other's company, and that pays dividends in the more heavyweight numbers: listen to the purpose with which they drive the first movement of the Hindemith forwards. But they make a lovely sound together too. I enjoyed the sweetness of Balsom's muted tone in the central Sarabande of the Françaix and the way that even while articulating brilliantly through Goedicke's *Concert-étude*, she can make her lines sing.

The Minuet from Ravel's *Sonatine* (the only solo piano item, presumably included as a nod to the pair's recital programmes) is gracefully done – and Poster conjures up a wonderfully smoky haze at the opening of his own transcription of 'The way you look tonight'. It's a relaxed end to the disc, and the burst of applause at the close comes as a surprise. Nothing about the sound quality, or the unforced naturalness of the pair's joint musicality, gives you any cause to realise that it was mainly recorded live. **Richard Bratby**

'Pardessus de viole'

Barrière Sonates pour le pardessus de viole avec la basse continue, Livre 5^e – Sonata No 4 (Book 5) **Boismortier** Sonata, Op 61 No 2 **Dollé** Sonates, duo & pièces pour le pardessus de viole, livre second – La favorite; La précieuse; Les regrets; Sonata No 1 **Hervelois** V^e Livre de pièces pour un pardessus de viole, Op 10 – Suite in D minor

Mélisande Corriveau pardessus de viole

Eric Milnes hpd

ATMA Classique © ACD2 2729 (59' • DDD)



A pardessus recital is a rarity, indeed! Fine treble viol plays are reasonably thick on

the ground these days but are heard mainly in 17th-century consort music and earlier ensemble music.

Pardessus players belong to a subset of viol players who specialise in 18th-century French chamber music, both *pièces* and sonatas composed specifically for the pardessus in *les goûts-réunis* style and violin sonatas of the day. The original devotees of the six- and later five-string pardessus were most often aristocratic. Mélisande Corriveau belongs to a new generation of players bringing formidable performing skills and knowledge of period practices. A recorder player and Baroque cellist as well, Corriveau wrote her doctoral thesis on the pardessus and on this CD eloquently plays an instrument by Nicolas Bertrand (1710). Listeners will marvel at its silvery tone, thinner than that of a violin but still sparkling and warm.

The composers represented here were all either viol players, Hervelois in particular, or knowledgeable about the specific idiomatic qualities of the instrument. Barrière, the violist who travelled to Italy and returned a cellist, contributes perhaps the most blended and beautiful pardessus sonata (1739), though Boismortier's (1736) runs a close second. The music – a varied mixture of Italian sonata movements, French dances and character pieces – is engaging and divinely interpreted by Corriveau and sympathetically accompanied by Eric Milnes. Dollé's *La précieuse* is a vivid portrait, infused with discourse, wit and fine detail, and *Les regrets* is virtually a private conversation. This CD remarkably evokes a hitherto neglected musical milieu that will, one hopes, win many new followers.

Julie Anne Sadie

'Les voyages de l'Amour'

Boismortier Premier Ballet de village en trio, Op 52. Concerto, Op 37. Sonatas – Op 14 No 3; Op 37 No 4. Les voyages de l'Amour, Op 60 – Simphonie pour l'arrivée des Génies Elémentaires **Corrette** Concerto comique, 'Le plaisir des dames', Op 8 No 6 **Rebel** Les caractères de la danse. Sonates à violon seul mêlées de plusieurs recits pour la viole, Livre II^e – Sonata No 6

Ensemble Meridiana

Chandos Chaconne © CHAN0812 (58' • DDD)



'Les voyages de l'Amour' takes its name from a 1736 *opéra-ballet*

by Boismortier. Looking at the instrumentation for that work, one might assume that twice as many players might be required to perform it, but instead, nearly all the members of Ensemble Meridiana put down and pick up a second or third instrument in the course of the opening *Simphonie*, which is a succession of contrasting sections, each differently orchestrated. In short, quite a *tour de force*.

The rest of the disc is devoted to ballet music, sonatas and concertos by Boismortier, Rebel and Corrette dating from the last years of the reign of Louis XIV and the early years of Louis XV. As in the first Boismortier item, Ensemble Meridiana vary the instrumentation from movement to movement, except in Rebel's sonata (1713), which is specifically composed for violin, bass viol and continuo. Less successful is the 1726 Boismortier Sonata (from Op 14), specifically intended for a pair of bass instruments, be they bassoons, viols or cellos; *faute de mieux* Ensemble Meridiana have unwisely paired unlike instruments – a bassoon and bass viol – which produces an unbalanced texture.

Among their arsenal of instruments are, however, some intriguing and delightful surprises. In the closing 'Mouvement de Chaconne' of Boismortier's *Premier Ballet de Village* (1734) the *colascione* – a novelty instrument resembling a small, long-necked lute played with a plectrum – can be clearly heard enriching the Baroque guitar as part of the continuo forces. Less immediately identified is the sound of *quinton* (aka a pardessus) in that work (listen to track 8 for the clearest evidence) and the voice flute (recorder) in Rebel's *Les caractères de la danse* (1715).

The overall impression of this music, and Corrette's *Concerto comique* (1733) in particular, is consistent with light-hearted occasions such as the autumn and spring Paris fairs with which Corrette was associated, contributing to a richer impression of the wider French 18th-century soundscape. **Julie Anne Sadie**

'Wild Men of the Seicento'

d'Anglebert Prelude in G minor **Biber** Sonata No 3 **Bull** Fantasias – in A minor; in D minor **Castello** Sonata seconda **Corelli** Sonata, Op 5 No 3 **Falcomieri** Dance Suite **Fontana** Sonata seconda **Mealli** Sonata 'La Cesta' **Selma y**



Alison Balsom and Tom Poster offer an attractive and eclectic programme on their new disc, 'Légende', which draws mainly on a live recording from St George's, Bristol

Salaverde Canzona seconda **Uccellini** Sonata nona **Van Eyck** Boffons

Red Priest

Red Priest © RP013 (64' • DDD)

'The Genteel Companion' ③

Anonymous Greensleeves to a Ground **Baston** Concerto in C **Croft** Sonata in G **Dalla Casa** Divisions on Petit Jacquet **Finger** Divisions on a Ground in F **Handel** Trio Sonata, HWV390 **Leclair** Sonata in F **Telemann** Concerto da camera in G minor **Van Eyck** Variations on 'Vat zalmen op den Avond doen?'

Richard Harvey recs with

Monica Huggett, **Roy Goodman** vns

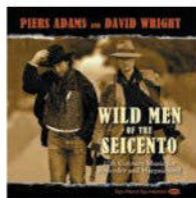
Mark Caudle vc/va da gamba **Sarah Cunningham**,

Philip Thorby vas da gamba **Timothy Roberts** hpd/

org **Alastair Ross** hpd **Jakob Lindberg** archlute

Altus © ALU0010 (70' • DDD)

From ASV originals



You only have to compare the titles of these two recordings to realise what an inspired idea it was to review them side by side (and no, it wasn't my idea). The

antics of HIPsters Red Priest need no introduction, yet it's a rare treat to have an action-packed recital recording, cloaked in spaghetti western aesthetics, by the ensemble's 'wild man of the recorder' Piers Adams and 'hard man of the harpsichord' David Wright. By contrast, Altus Records' handsomely packaged and remastered reissue of Richard Harvey and friends' classic 1986 ASV recording of the same name is the very epitome of charm and decorum.

That's not to say that Harvey, who performs on a fine collection of recorders made by the legendary Friedrich von Huene, shies away from extravagance and virtuosity – witness the brilliance of his playing in Leclair's Sonata in F or Finger's Divisions on a Ground in F, the latter otherwise so full of wistful charm. But whether he's in the company of such exceptional musicians as Monica Huggett, Roy Goodman, Jakob Lindberg or Timothy Roberts, or of composers such as Telemann, Handel, Baston or Croft, it's Harvey's urbanity and disarming *sprezzatura* that shine through every time.

The title 'The Genteel Companion' is borrowed from 'a little book of instruction and tunes for the recorder, published in

1683'. Such charming self-effacement would seem wildly out of place in the world of the 'madcap musicians of the Seicento', as Adams and Wright have characterised the likes of Biber, Castello and Mealli: those 'early trailblazers' whose music 'can still infuse us today with the thrill of the unexpected'.

And thrills are exactly what Adams and Wright deliver. Opening with Biber's extraordinary Sonata No 3, with its coda that is 'pure *Monty Python*', and careful to break up the madness with more reflective, lyrical works by Uccellini and Fontana, they storm their way through thickets of keyboard batteries, recorder roudels and all manner of technical devilry with superhuman virtuosity, a laughing recklessness and style you can't buy.

Respite from the fireworks can be found too in harpsichord pieces such as d'Anglebert's G minor Prelude and Bull's Fantasia in A minor, where one is able to savour Wright's pungent artistry in isolation. But it is in the final work, Corelli's Sonata in C major, Op 5 No 3, so exquisitely rendered by Adams and Wright, that we find perhaps the most natural link between these two very different yet perfectly complementary recordings. **William Yeoman**

Alan Curtis

The American musicologist, harpsichordist and conductor was a pioneer in early-music performance, especially opera. Exactly one year after his death, David Vickers pays tribute

Alan Curtis (1934-2015) possessed essential credentials as an innovator of historical performance practice: his philological inquisitiveness about repertoire and his willingness to experiment with period instruments (before it was fashionable) placed him at the forefront of pioneering approaches to performing Baroque operas. His curiosity and enthusiasm were traits that emerged during his undergraduate studies at Michigan State University, where he picked up Chrysander's old 19th-century edition of Handel's works and marvelled at how much great music was unknown. His newly awakened interest in Baroque music led him to study the harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam during the late 1950s, and he became the first player in modern times to grapple convincingly with the problems of interpreting Louis Couperin's unmeasured preludes (which he later recorded for Deutsche Grammophon's Archiv label – reviewed 12/76). During the heyday of LPs, Curtis recorded solo harpsichord music prolifically, producing interpretations of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (EMI, 1977), the French and English suites (Teldec, 1980), Rameau's *Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin* (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 1981) and many others which have not been reissued since.

Curtis's career as a performer was combined with that of a distinguished academic at the University of California, Berkeley, and it was in the Bay Area that his career as an opera conductor was launched by a production of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* with Carole Bogard in the title-role; this yielded a four-LP set (Cambridge, 1966) featuring the Oakland Symphony Orchestra – an interpretation that was a far cry from the evangelical zeal of Curtis's friends in Europe. In 1977 he assembled a group of predominantly Dutch-trained specialists at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw for a trail-blazing performance of Handel's *Admeto*, recorded afterwards in the studio for EMI. Curtis's ensemble became

known as Il Complesso Barocco, and their landmark *Admeto* was the first time that Handel's King's Theatre orchestra had been reconstructed according to historical eyewitness reports, constituted on approximately the correct scale and using period instruments, including theorbo and two harpsichords in the continuo group. Moreover, a complete scholarly text of the work was presented without abridgements, and all of the roles were sung in their correct original ranges without any octave transpositions – all components hitherto rare in Handel opera performances on stage or in the studio. Meanwhile, the fusion of research and teaching at Berkeley and guest-conducting at European opera houses led Curtis into preparing groundbreaking editions of Monteverdi's late Venetian operas (published by Novello), although he was never happy with patchy live recordings of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Fonit Cetra, 1982) and *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (Nuova Era, 1992).

The 1980s and early '90s were quiet for Curtis's recording career. In an interview in 2004, he explained to me: 'I was then in a period when I really didn't like recording. I wanted everything to be live performance. Now I'm in a period when it's nice to culminate our work in a live performance, but I want to have a recording made. So now my projects tend to be aimed at recording. Which I suppose you could say is the result of old age. But my viewpoint has changed: I want to leave a record, but don't want to do long exhausting tours. I would much rather do a brief exhausting recording, then sit back in my armchair and listen to it!'

In 1992, Curtis relocated permanently to Italy (with homes in Venice and Florence) and soon reinvented Il Complesso Barocco as an Italian ensemble devoted to Renaissance and Baroque chamber vocal music – and from 1997 the group was recording regularly or Virgin's early-music imprint Veritas. Supremely accomplished collections

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1966 – *Conducts Monteverdi in California*

Career as opera conductor and reputation as Monteverdi specialist established with Californian production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* starring Carole Bogard; thereafter conducts many pioneering productions of Baroque operas in Europe

•1976 – *Triumphs over Couperin*

His LP of unmeasured preludes by Louis Couperin is issued by DG's Archiv label. Curtis was the first of Gustav Leonhardt's harpsichord pupils to have a prestigious career as a recording artist of solo keyboard music

•1977 – *Trail-blazing performance of a Handel opera*

Assembles a group of early-music specialists (to become known as Il Complesso Barocco) to reconstruct Handel's orchestra for a seminal concert performance of *Admeto* at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

•1992 – *Settles in Italy*

Relocates permanently to Venice and Florence, and reinvents Il Complesso Barocco as an Italian ensemble devoted to Renaissance and Baroque chamber vocal music – an expertise manifested in the group's provision of music for Werner Herzog's film *Gesualdo: Death for Five Voices* (1995) and a series of madrigal recordings for various labels

•1997-98 – *Begins recording for Veritas*

Seminal releases from Virgin's early music imprint Veritas include two volumes of Monteverdi chamber duets and various madrigals from the late books (including Roberta Invernizzi's beguiling performance in *Lamento della Ninfa*), and also the premiere recording of Handel's only Florentine opera, *Rodrigo* – the beginning of Curtis's obsessive period of producing Handel operas



of madrigals by Michelangelo Rossi and Antonio Lotti (both issued in 1997) – see ‘The Essential Recording’ below – were followed a year later by two volumes of Monteverdi’s chamber duets and *concertato* madrigals.

However, the tide turned fully when Curtis returned to Handel’s operas with an obsessive passion. He had directed the first modern performances of the Florentine opera *Rodrigo* (unperformed since 1707) in 1984, and eventually issued a striking recording (Virgin, 1998) that suggested an Italian-based ensemble could contribute meaningfully to a field dominated by the northern Europeans. A series of six more Handel operas appeared on Virgin over the next 15 years. Supported by generous sponsorship from the crime novelist Donna Leon, Curtis also released five Handel operas on the Archiv label (between 2005 and 2009). The relatively quick cycle of preparing performance material, rehearsing and recording operas without having necessarily performed them (whether in concert or the theatre) was not always conducive to achieving emotionally nuanced drama and the highest level of musical inspiration. On some occasions the outcomes were the proverbial curate’s egg (excellent in parts, but not so good in others), but the

conductor’s talent-scouting for new voices often proved to be inspired.

Curtis’s broader discography presents ample proof that he was driven by a lifelong passion for reviving unfairly neglected repertoire. Benedetto Ferrari’s oratorio *Il Sansone* (Virgin, 2000) revealed the merit of the musician at the heart of Monteverdi’s last operatic productions, while Francesco Conti’s oratorio *David* (Virgin, 2007) hinted at the untapped

His broader discography presents ample proof that he was driven by a lifelong passion for reviving unfairly neglected repertoire

musical riches of Italian musical culture in early 18th-century Vienna. Having long been ahead of the curve regarding the revival of Vivaldi’s operas, Curtis conducted industrious reconstructions of *Motezuma* (DG, 2006) and *Catone in Utica* (Naïve, 2013). Gluck’s pre-*Orfeo* career was illuminated by an accomplished interpretation of the 1750 Prague version of *Ezio* (Virgin, 2011). Another labour of love was the premiere recording of Domenico Scarlatti’s opera *Tolomeo e Alessandro* (2010) – which for unfathomable reasons DG released on CD only in Spain, leaving Curtis understandably disappointed by its lack of exposure (it is available for download, though). To my mind, these versatile achievements beyond the high-profile Handel opera projects are the key components of Curtis’s legacy. **G**

musical riches of Italian musical culture in early 18th-century Vienna. Having long been ahead of the curve regarding the revival of Vivaldi’s operas, Curtis conducted industrious reconstructions of *Motezuma* (DG, 2006) and *Catone in Utica* (Naïve, 2013). Gluck’s pre-*Orfeo* career was illuminated by an accomplished interpretation of the 1750 Prague version of *Ezio* (Virgin, 2011). Another labour of love was the premiere recording of Domenico Scarlatti’s opera *Tolomeo e Alessandro* (2010) – which for unfathomable

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Instrumental



Philip Clark on a disc of Feldman and Crumb from Steven Osborne:

'Slammed fff chords breaking into echoing ppp aftershocks make the piano resonate like you never heard' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 64](#)



Jeremy Nicholas on Ronald Brautigam's period Mendelssohn:

'It is fascinating to hear such familiar music much as Mendelssohn himself might have heard it' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 68](#)

JS Bach

JS Bach Six French Suites, BWV812-817

Fröberger Partita II, FbWV602 **Telemann** Suite, TWV32:14 (attrib Bach, BWV824)

Julian Perkins *clav*

Resonus (M) ② RES10163 (116' • DDD)

JS Bach

JS Bach Six French Suites, BWV812-817

Richard Egarr *hpd*

Harmonia Mundi (M) ② HMU90 7583/4 (105' • DDD)



The 'French' seem to be the least favoured on record among Bach's keyboard suites, yet also perhaps the ones most played by people in their homes – including Bach's, it is generally supposed. Julian Perkins performs them on the ever-intimate clavichord, and very sweet and delicate they sound on it. Actually he uses two clavichords, both copies of German late-18th-century models: the one used for Suites Nos 1, 5 and 6 has a thin but silvery singing tone, while Nos 2, 3 and 4 are heard on an instrument with a brighter, pingier sound almost like a mandolin. The ability to play loud and soft, albeit within a very narrow and low-level range – is effectively exploited by Perkins; melodies sing over their accompaniments and the soft-curved sarabandes (the Fifth especially) are shaped with beauty and feeling. Maybe some rapid passages that do not lie so neatly under the hands lose their poise, but that doesn't stop this being a well-executed and attractive release, worth investigating for its different slant on the music. Perkins includes the preludes found in some sources for Suites Nos 4 and 6, and complements Bach with fine little suites by Fröberger and Telemann.

Richard Egarr uses a copy of a French harpsichord for his enjoyable recording, and what a beauty it is, especially in the single 8ft register! Egarr's sarabandes are not as lovingly done as Perkins's but his allemandes

are as delightful as I have heard, like lazily flowing summer rivers intrigued by rubato eddies. The heavier registration used for courantes and gigues confirms, however, that the overall conception here is bigger – indeed, if one didn't know the Bach Partitas and *English Suites* existed, Egarr's bold and confident bearing might prevent one thinking of these suites in the conventional way as 'small' at all. As usual, he adds plenty of surface ornamentation, mostly in the form of trills, filled-in intervals and broken-chord flickers, but their ubiquity can make them seem rather dutiful after a while. Mind you, who nowadays would attempt to match the daring elegance of Bach's own variant passage in the second half of the Fifth Sarabande, used as a repeat ornament by both Perkins and Egarr, and enough to remind one of the greatness that lies even in what can seem Bach's most unassuming music? **Lindsay Kemp**

JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Pascal Dubreuil *hpd*

Ramée (E) RAM1404 (82' • DDD)



I first became aware of Pascal Dubreuil through his recording of Bach's *English*

Suites, which Lindsay Kemp praised with reservations (9/13). The harpsichordist's *Goldberg Variations* share certain of the earlier release's virtues and drawbacks. Like his erstwhile teacher Yannick le Gaillard (whose own magnificent *Goldbergs* deserve reissue), Dubreuil possesses an acutely refined technique. You notice this mostly in both accounts of the Aria and in slower, lyrical variations where the harpsichordist binds legato lines with subtly varied finger overlapping, akin to a pianist who commands the sustain pedal's innermost secrets. Such finesse extends to his understated ornamentation.

What is more, Dubreuil approaches these movements with a sense of breadth

and flexibility only hinted at in the *English Suites*. Take Var 13, for example. The way Dubreuil lingers on certain key notes or how the phrases organically expand and contract enlivens Bach's melodic trajectory without sounding the least bit fussy or mannered. The revered 'Black Pearl' Var 25 is similarly aria-like, while virtuoso showpieces such as the double-manual Vars 5 and 20 take on a slower, more vocally orientated perspective than usual. By contrast, the traditionally slow and ceremonial Var 15 will surprise listeners for its brisk angularity and uncommonly prominent bass-line.

However, what ultimately holds Dubreuil back from the *Goldbergs'* top tier are his dry and dragging accounts of Var 29 and the canons at the fourth and the octave (Var 12 and 24), not to mention the sound of registrations being changed between variations. The robustly resonant engineering exaggerates these noises, and they ought to have been edited out. Dubreuil provides clear, informative annotations and observes all repeats, save for the Aria *da capo*. **Jed Distler**

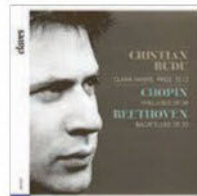
Chopin • Beethoven

Beethoven Bagatelles, Op 33

Chopin Preludes, Op 28

Cristian Budu *pf*

Claves (E) 50-1602 (60' • DDD)



Listening to his impressive new recording, it's easy to understand why

Cristian Budu won the Clara Haskil Competition in Vevey three years ago this September. A Brazilian of Romanian descent who studied at the University of São Paulo and the New England Conservatory, Budu is a stunningly original pianist with musical insight and maturity that could inspire envy in colleagues twice his age. He has the sort of hands that used to be called 'velvet paws', which are seemingly incapable of making an ugly sound at the instrument.



An impressive debut from Christian Budu, winner of the Clara Haskil Competition in 2013

Online videos show him to be strictly business. No demonstrations of how almost to fall off the bench, no stomping the floor, no challenging Lon Chaney for the title 'Man of a Thousand Faces'. Completely relaxed but with an almost scary intensity of focus, Budu's every motion is directed towards the production of sound. All this comes through loud and clear via the strictly audio medium of the CD, captured with remarkable nuance by the Claves engineers.

For his debut recording, Budu chooses an entire disc of miniatures. He is able to focus attention on the tiniest details while leaving proportions perfectly intact. Eloquent phrasing is ever front and centre, and no expressive potential is left unexplored. He commands an immense colour palette and moves from a robust *fortissimo* to a scarcely audible *pianissimo* in a nanosecond.

It's a credit to the subtlety of Budu's musicianship to say that his Op 33 Beethoven Bagatelles could easily be transferred to an 1804 Streicher with barely an adjustment of the touch he uses on the modern Steinway. Scrupulously observant of the composer's agogic indications, the abundant drolleries of these pieces are understated and all the wittier for it. My favourite is the C major

(No 5), which scurries about with amazingly precise urgency. When all the coruscating bustle finally runs up against a solid wall, Budu resists violent assault, the default choice of most pianists. Instead, he recovers from his bewilderment and, to great comic effect, seems to fashion a door, and calmly walk through.

Were his Chopin Preludes not so delicately coloured, their visual equivalent might be leafing through a portfolio of Ingres's finest graphite portraits, marvelling at their succinct precision and lifelike directness. At once their striking individuality embraces a sweep and cohesion that leave the impression that the entire set could have been captured in a single take. The A minor (No 2) demonstrates Budu's ability to create a heart-gripping *pianissimo*, whispered and just barely audible. In the G major (No 3), the right hand floats spacious and serene over the bubbling cascade of left-hand figuration. The A major (No 7) is a genuine Mazurka in microcosm, while the tolling bells of the E major (No 9) seem to grow and grow without ever exceeding the bounds of an exquisitely beautiful sound. When things grow desperate, depicting fight or flight, as in Nos 12, 16, 18 or 22, the dramatic tension is breathtaking.

Recently it seems as if the tap were left running and we're suddenly knee-deep in Chopin Preludes. Of those I've heard, including the sets by Goerner, Cho, Yundi and Sokolov, Budu's are the most enduringly satisfying. Bolstered by a vital and intelligent Beethoven, they strongly suggest that Cristian Budu is an artist we'll be eager to hear more of – the sooner the better. **Patrick Rucker**

Chopin

'Imogen Cooper's Chopin'

Ballades – No 1, Op 23; No 4, Op 52. Berceuse, Op 57. Fantaisie, Op 49. Nocturnes – No 8, Op 27 No 2; No 16, Op 55 No 2; No 17, Op 62 No 1; No 18, Op 62 No 2. Polonaise-fantaisie, Op 61

Imogen Cooper *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10902 (81' • DDD)



From the disc's title we must assume that this is Imogen Cooper's idiosyncratic (perhaps contentious?) take on a composer with whom she is not normally associated. It is intriguing to speculate why this distinguished pianist at this stage of a

lengthy career, rightly renowned for her playing of Schubert and Schumann but whose more than 30 CDs have not included a note of Chopin, has suddenly seen the light.

It is a well-chosen and contrasted programme, opening, courageously enough, with one of the composer's most elusive works, the late *Polonaise-fantaisie*. In the quieter lyrical passages she finds a rare poignancy that I find most affecting – and indeed it is this element that is a constant feature of Cooper's playing. She has always been rightly lauded for her luminous, rich tone and it is deployed tellingly in Op 61 and the two late Nocturnes which follow (there are similar passages in the Ballade No 4 and the F minor Fantaisie). Then one begins to become aware that the colours have remained very much the same throughout these three pieces, and that leading voices in the right hand are projected in an almost aggressive manner. Try the D flat major Nocturne, compare it with Lipatti or Rubinstein inter alios and you'll see what I mean.

The programme has been meticulously prepared, of course, but one is left with the feeling that it has all been so premeditated that there has been no room for anything surprising or spontaneous to happen in the studio (the concert hall at Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh). Curiously, the *pp* notes an octave above the stave in Op 61 sound rounded and expressive, while at the opposite end of the recital, the same register at the end of the Berceuse sounds disembodied and slightly out of tune.

Cooper in a revealing apology in the booklet wonders if she has succeeded in conveying what has taken 'many years to articulate'. No matter, she seems to say, for 'the journey has been, and continues to be, moving and wonderful'. Such thoughtful and deeply felt interpretations of these works are always welcome but I feel that, ultimately, Cooper's Chopin is work-in-progress. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Chopin

'Polonia'

Polonaises – No 1, Op 26 No 1; No 2, Op 26 No 2; No 3, 'Military', Op 40 No 1; No 4, Op 40 No 2; No 5, Op 44; No 6, 'Heroic', Op 53; No 7, 'Polonaise-fantaisie', Op 61

Pascal Amoyel *pf*

La Dolce Volta © LDV25 (64' • DDD)



Pascal Amoyel, the enigmatic French pianist whose explorations of

Chopin include a set of Nocturnes (Calliope, 2004) and last year's '1846: Dernière année à Nohant' (Harmonia Mundi, 4/15), has now released a disc of all the mature Polonaises, excluding Op 22.

From the outset it's difficult to know exactly what to make of these performances. The same rhythmic instability that pervades Amoyel's Liszt interpretations is even more pronounced in Chopin's alternately brooding, explosive and heroic dances. His execution of the distinctive polonaise rhythm (down-beat quaver, two semiquavers, four quavers) is ambiguously haphazard and occasionally clumsy. Left entirely to the listeners' imagination is the dance's essential character, conjuring ceremonial processions, straight-spined hauteur and wide, floor-sweeping steps. The fully legitimate expressive device of breaking chords here becomes so reflexive that it devolves into an emasculating tic. If one views Chopin's Polonaises as some of his most outspokenly patriotic music, replacing decisiveness and some simulacrum of passion with a vaguely noncommittal blandness seems peculiar indeed.

The brutally abrupt opening measures of Op 26 No 1 set up the expectation that some consequence is in store, some future drama presaged. By the end, however, we understand that the outburst was nothing more than an isolated if recurrent anomaly, having little connection with the rest of the piece. Considerably impaired by narrow dynamic range and limited articulation strategies, Op 40 No 2 chugs along nonetheless with the torpor of a paddleboat plying a tropical river. In the absence of a long line, the *Polonaise-fantaisie* threatens to lose its way, emerging finally as a succession of fragments. Throughout these performances, antecedent and consequent phrases, as well as large repeated sections, are often indistinguishable from one another. With a rhythmic scaffolding that sways with the shifting wind, stretching or contracting phrases for expressive purposes is clearly not in the offing. The overall effect is of numbing sameness.

Like all artworks worthy of the name, the Chopin Polonaises invite a wide range of approaches and interpretations, the heroism of Rubinstein, for instance, the grandeur of Paderewski, Jonas's charm, Sofronitsky's colour, Cliburn's elegance or Pollini's implacability. But the single, indispensable common denominator for effectively communicating this music is surely a compelling point of view, born of conviction. **Patrick Rucker**

Feldman • Crumb

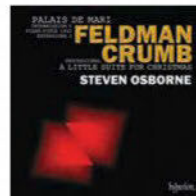
Crumb A Little Suite for Christmas, AD 1979.

Processional Feldman Extensions 3.

Intermission 5. Palais de Mari. Piano Piece 1952

Steven Osborne *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68108 (63' • DDD)



I can't imagine Morton Feldman, cantankerous curmudgeon that he was, would have been

thrilled at the prospect of having his music paired with that of George Crumb, but Steven Osborne makes a solid case beyond any obvious fact that their careers happened to overlap during a certain period in the history of American music.

The arid, slapped clusters of Feldman's *Extensions 3* (1952) set the tone nicely for Crumb's painterly, Giotto-inspired *A Little Suite for Christmas, AD 1979* (1980), which itself begins with an accumulation of compacted clusters. But wisely Osborne doesn't try to push any supposed stylistic affiliation too far. *Intermission 5, Piano Piece 1952* and *Extensions 3* are exemplars of Feldman's formative experiments with reconfiguring musical scale, and were all written in 1952. The seamless procession of harmonically tangled dotted crotchets, alternating between right and left hands, arranged neatly to form *Piano Piece 1952* is marked 'Slowly and quietly with all beats equal' and Osborne does Feldman's bidding cleanly and accurately; clearly he's thought long and hard about the implications Feldman's indication has for shaking entrenched patterns of expressive behaviour.

If the challenge *Piano Piece 1952* presents is keeping Feldman's gyrating contours contained within a narrow bandwidth of dynamic and pulse, *Intermission 5* and *Extensions 3* are both concerned with blunt contrasts of dynamic and texture. On Mode, Aki Takahashi pushes *Extensions 3* to a death-defying 6'43"; at 5'30" Osborne keeps a safety net, but this is a very fine performance. Abrupt juxtapositions of slammed *fff* chords breaking into echoing *ppp* aftershocks make the piano resonate like you never heard, and Hyperion's microphones intimately capture the wailing overtones and ricocheting piano action.

Palais de Mari (1986) is Feldman's most-recorded piano work, and Osborne's supple control of overarching line and timbre means this is a real contender alongside hardcore Feldmanistas such as Aki Takahashi, John Tilbury (LondonHALL) and Steffen Schleiermacher (MDG). The sort of dramatic rhetoric Crumb throws around finds Osborne patrolling more familiar



Javier Negrin, who couples Granados and Mompou on his new Odradek disc

terrain, and *A Little Suite for Christmas* in particular receives a dramatically vigilant and eloquently coloured reading. Feldman and Crumb pair rather well together – but, shush, don't tell Morty. **Philip Clark**

Extensions 3, Palais de Mari – selected comparison:

Takabashi (MODE) MODE054

Palais de Mari – selected comparisons:

Tilbury (LOND) DO13

Schleiermacher (MDG) MDG613 1523-2

Granados · Mompou

'Traces'

Granados Goyescas

Mompou Variations sur un thème de Chopin

Javier Negrin *pf*

Odradek © ODRCD325 (77' • DDD)



Granados's *Goyescas* is more than a suite of piano pieces: it's a road trip where one

encounters a diverse succession of moods and landscapes. To guide the prospective pianist through terrains of notey and complex figurations, Granados provides copious markings that indicate subtle and specific tempo modifications, a wide dynamic palette and detailed expressive

directives. Ignore them and you'll find that the melodies won't palpitate, the counterpoint won't speak and the harmonies will lose one or two layers of sexiness.

The opening 'Los requiebros' brilliantly conveys sweeping exuberance and teasing coyness, contrasting qualities that are minimised by Javier Negrin's headlong, generalised approach, especially in the way he skirts over the rapid filigree as if sweeping dust under a carpet. He captures the second movement's brooding eloquence well but without the long-lined animation and idiomatically caressing rubato that Luis Fernando Pérez and Rosa-Torres-Pardo (DG download) brought to their respective recordings. Negrin fares better in his pointed and sensitively shaped reading of 'La maja y el ruiseñor' but his literal and occasional stiff handling of No 3's fandango rhythms and the ghostly epilogue's evocations of plucked guitar strings yield to Garrick Ohlsson's more imaginatively inflected accounts. In the suite's longest and most substantial movement, 'El amor y la muerte' (arguably Granados's masterpiece), Negrin assiduously weaves the numerous tempo shifts, dynamic outbursts and reiterations of earlier themes into a fluid, fulfilling whole.

Although Granados's standalone *El pelele* is traditionally included as part of *Goyescas*

performances and recordings, Negrin offers instead Mompou's gorgeous and witty variations on Chopin's A major Prelude. In contrast to Alexandre Tharaud's rippling surface elegance, Negrin probes with deliberation, notably in the 10th variation's reharmonisation of the Chopin *Fantaisie-impromptu*'s central theme. The piano is recorded at close range, yet without losing tonal heft. In sum, Negrin's *Goyescas* sometimes impresses, yet not enough to challenge recent contenders, let alone Alicia de Larrocha's Decca benchmark. **Jed Distler**

Granados – selected comparisons:

Ohlsson (4/12) (HYPE) CDA67846

Pérez (4/12) (MIRA) MIR138

Mompou – selected comparison:

Tharaud (4/08) (HARM) HMC90 1982

Hesketh

Horae (pro Clara). Nocte oscura. Three Japanese Miniatures. Through Magic Casements

Clare Hammond *pf*

BIS © BIS2193 (67' • DDD/DSD)



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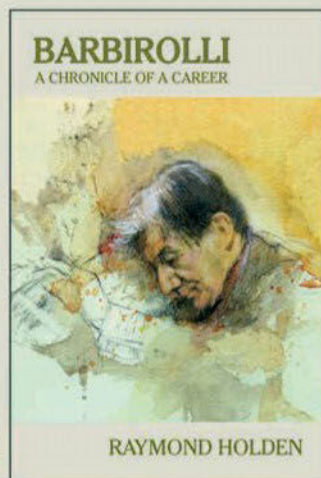
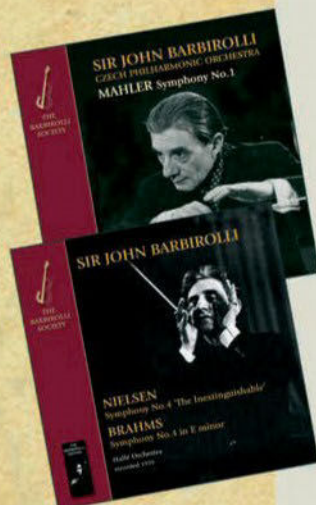
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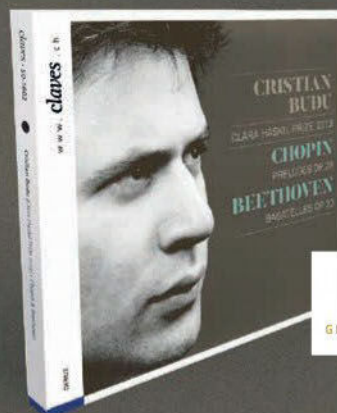
The Times 21 October 1960

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Pianist Clare Hammond is the dedicatee of *Horae (pro Clara)*, the centrepiece of her new disc of music by Kenneth Hesketh

three years ago (NMC, 7/13) offered a well-balanced sequence of colourful musical canvases, and its mouthful of a title – ‘Wunderkammer (konzert)’ – coupled with a collection of Joseph Cornell’s ‘found objects’ on the cover, signalled Hesketh’s fascination with miniature mechanisms and the magical, sometimes disturbing dramas their confrontations can create.

Magic and mystery, along with clock-like mechanics, feature again in the compositions for piano brought together on this new disc from BIS. It is extremely well recorded, with Clare Hammond (for whom the most substantial piece was written) playing throughout with a winning combination of technical subtlety and expressive spontaneity in music that presents plenty of challenges to the performer.

The 40-minute *Horae (pro Clara)* is an ambitious transformation of the idea of the Book of Hours into a sequence of 12 movements that can be played in any order, and therefore avoid the conventional structural process of a steadily building dramatic momentum. There are contrasts between quasi-Impressionistic figuration and more forceful, fragmented states, reaching what sound like brief outbursts of sheer rage in the final section. Overall, however, the emphasis is on a kind of tranced

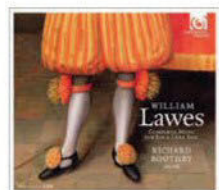
meditativeness that is more immediately effective in the shorter pieces that frame *Horae (pro Clara)*. In particular, the two compositions from 2002, *Notte oscura* and *Three Japanese Miniatures*, are outstanding in the way that what Hesketh has described as his tendency to ‘scepticism and a sense of pessimism’ keeps the individual pieces veering away from predictability while making very satisfying wholes. The last of the Miniatures, the only truly scherzo-like music on the disc, provides a notably effective close. **Arnold Whittall**

Lawes

Complete Music for Solo Lyra Viol

Richard Boothby *lyra viol*

Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7625 (60' • DDD)



Lock the doors, close the curtains and turn the lights down before putting this

disc on. Here is music for an intimate space: solo music for solitary souls. This is a rare opportunity to hear solo lyra viol music from the early 1630s played on a beautiful period instrument by one of today’s foremost exponents of the Jacobean

repertoire. Richard Boothby has been playing English consort music (some of it by Lawes) with Fretwork for over 30 years, so is as well placed as anyone today to interpret this body of solo music, most of it recorded here for the first time.

Samuel Pepys apparently played lyra viol music on whatever viol he had to hand, but in fact the lyra differs from the slightly larger bass viol in several respects: the strings are lighter and closer to the fingerboard, the bridge more rounded to accommodate the execution of chordal passages and, in addition, some instruments were strung below the fingerboard with sympathetic strings that could be plucked by the left hand. Unlike other viols – and members of the violin family – the lyra was variably tuned, and its music notated in tablature. Boothby plays on an exquisite lyra viol by Richard Meares from the Royal College of Music Collection.

Lawes’s music is in general jolly and introspective by turns. Boothby plays in a charmingly gentle, often elegant yet spare way that suggests he is enjoying a private pleasure which we are nonetheless invited to savour. The 35 pieces included here are mostly dances, none lasting longer than three minutes, characterised by syncopated rhythmic patterns, delicate implied

harmony and chordal accompaniments, conversational textures (the Corantos in particular) and occasional hints of folksong. The delicacy with which Boothby phrases and ornaments the music is sublime. A great night in, then.

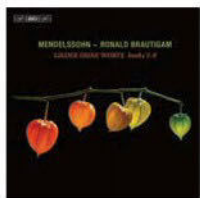
Julie Anne Sadie

Mendelssohn

Lieder ohne Worte – Book 5, Op 62; Book 6, Op 67; Book 7, Op 85; Book 8, Op 102. Five Individual Lieder ohne Worte. Sechs Kinderstücke, Op 72. Zwei Stücke aus dem Notenalbum für Eduard Benecke

Ronald Brautigam *pf*

BIS (F) BIS1983 (74' • DDD/DSD)



Few pieces conjure up more immediately and vividly the comfortable middle-class world of the 1840s than Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*. They provide a perfect soundtrack for Jane Austen – though she was writing several decades earlier – and while not all of them rise to the same level of lyrical inspiration, surely only the brown-rice-and-two-cold-baths-a-day brigade could fail to respond to Mendelssohn's miraculous little tone-poems.

For his second volume of the *Songs Without Words*, Ronald Brautigam uses the same instrument as he did for the first – a 2010 piano by Paul McNulty, after an 1830 instrument by Pleyel. This instalment has the two remaining collections published in the composer's lifetime, two further compilations (each again containing six pieces) published posthumously, five individual *Songs*, six *Kinderstücke* (1847) and two morceaux *Aus dem Notenalbum für Eduard Benecke*.

Looking back at my review of Vol 1 (3/13), I was rather too snuffy about the limitations of the Pleyel. Brautigam is no less revelatory in this repertoire than he was in his groundbreaking traversal of the Beethoven sonatas and concertos. Despite the rapid decay, the variety of tangy colours he conjures from the instrument really is the aural equivalent of removing a century of dirt from an oil painting, so that the hackneyed ones ('Spinning Song', 'Spring Song') come up freshly minted, and the less familiar, such as the gorgeous Op 62 No 1 in G major (the first track), make you wonder why some are not better known and more widely played.

If, like me, you have an irrational aversion to the fortepiano, Brautigam might well change your mind. It is fascinating to hear such familiar music

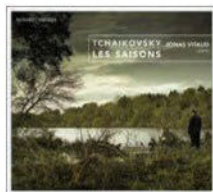
much as Mendelssohn himself might have heard it. That said, I maintain that more than 73 minutes of works never intended to be heard in such a sequence is not the best way to appreciate his genius so that, despite the Dutchman's great artistry, we may paraphrase Mr Bennett and suggest some way through the disc that 'he has delighted us long enough'. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Tchaikovsky

The Seasons, Op 37b. Grande Sonate, Op 37

Jonas Víttaud *pf*

Mirare (F) MIR308 (74' • DDD)



Coming soon after Freddy Kempf's identical coupling, Jonas Víttaud's

recording is altogether less diffident. He speaks of the *Grande Sonate* as 'rich and ambitious', an estimate not shared by many competitors in Moscow's Tchaikovsky Competition where it was once required repertoire (a rushed and disengaged performance by John Ogdon nearly cost him his first prize). Certainly it needs special pleading, notably in texture and sonority, if it is not to sound opaque and over-extended. And although Víttaud's commitment is never in doubt, his overall proficiency becomes a limited virtue. This is particularly true of his heavy-handed, literal way with the Scherzo, where I greatly missed Cherkassky's mercurial live magic.

Tchaikovsky's gentle melancholy in many of the *Seasons* would also benefit from a greater fluidity. And if February is truly *allegro giusto*, its impact is blunted by a prosaic view of April's fitful sunshine and a less than insinuating way with December – in the finest hands an irresistible white-tie-and-tails ballroom waltz. You will find greater warmth and affection from Pavel Kolesnikov, while Joseph Moog proves himself a formidable rival even to such greats as Richter and Pletnev in the sonata.

Bryce Morrison

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Kempf (3/16) (BIS) BIS2140

Grande Sonate – selected comparison:

Moog (4/14) (ONYX) ONYX4126

Cherkassky (IVOR) IC70904

The Seasons – selected comparisons:

Kolesnikov (8/14) (HYPE) CDA68028

Youri Egorov

'The 1980 Ambassador Auditorium Recital, Pasadena, California, USA'

Chopin Etudes, Op 25 **Debussy** Images – Reflets dans l'eau **Liszt** La campanella,

S141 No 3^a **Mozart** Fantasia, K475

Schumann Fantasie, Op 17

Youri Egorov *pf*

First Hand (F) FHR44 (82' • ADD)

Recorded live, April 3, 1980; ^aFebruary 12, 1978

Youri Egorov

'Autumn Songs'

Bartók Suite, Op 14 Sz62^a **Brahms** Three Piano Pieces, Op 117^b **Liszt** La campanella, S141 No 3^c

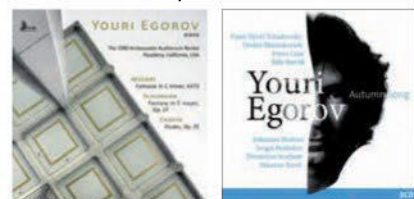
Prokofiev Piano Sonata No 3, Op 28^d **Ravel** Miroirs^e **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas^f – Kk9; Kk32; Kk87; Kk125; Kk159; Kk322; Kk380; Kk518 **Shostakovich** Prelude and Fugue, Op 87 No 3^c **Tchaikovsky** Theme and Variations, Op 19 No 6^c. The Seasons, Op 37a – Autumn Song (two versions^g)

Youri Egorov *pf*

Etcetera (F) ② KTC1520 (123' • ADD/DDD)

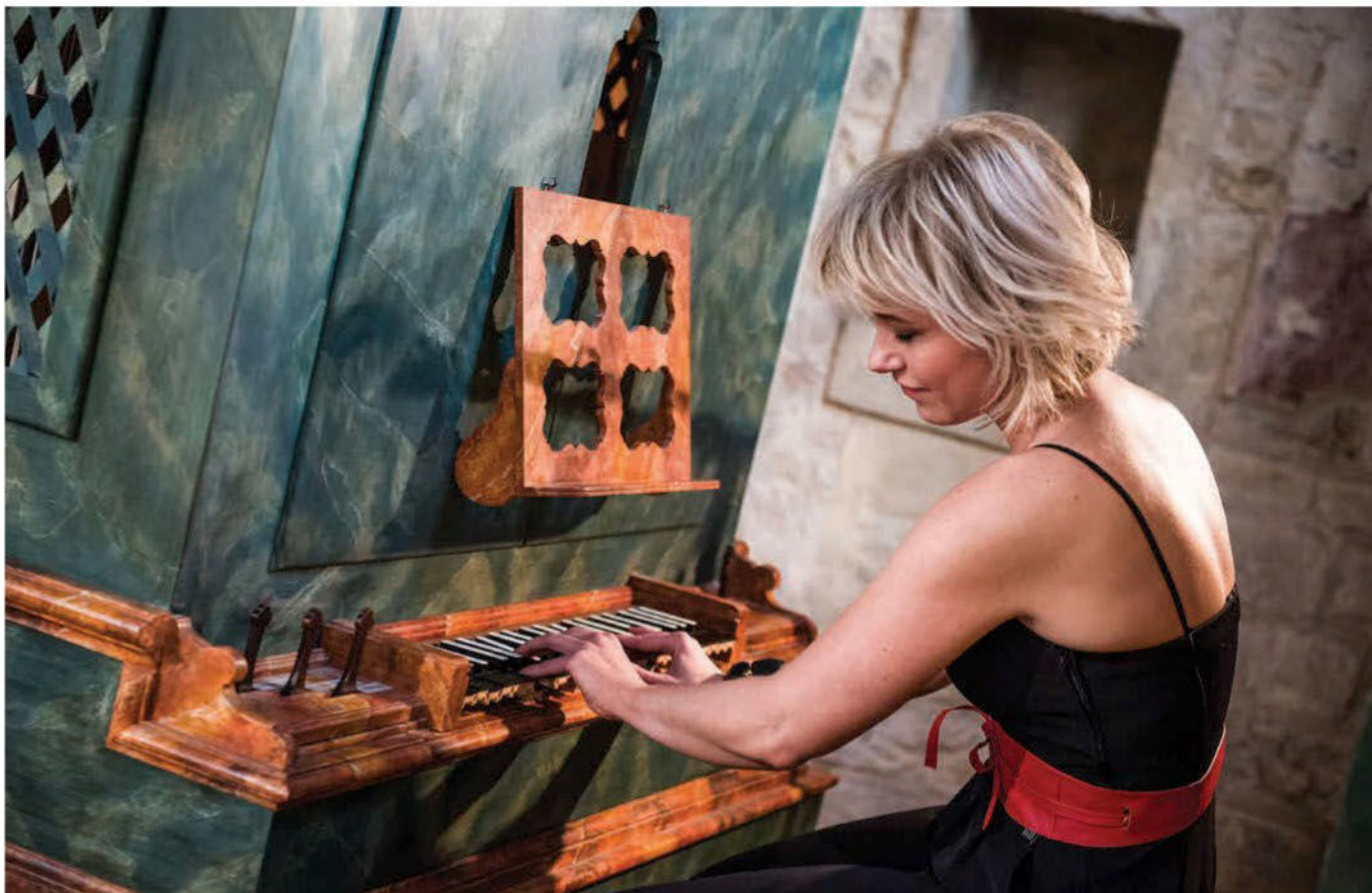
Broadcast performances: ^cNovember 3, 1974;

^aMay 25, 1981; ^bApril 22, ^dMay 6 1983; ^fOctober 25, 1985; ^eMarch 28, ^gApril 24, 1987



Fans of Youri Egorov will be delighted with these two previously unreleased programmes. The first is an April 1980 recital he played at the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena. This is apparently one of two Egorov releases from First Hand Records, with another anticipated later this year. The second is a two-disc set, selected from radio recitals which Egorov broadcast during the 1970s and '80s, culled from the archives of Amsterdam Radio by Piet Tullenaar.

The Pasadena recital's Schumann C major *Fantasie* captures many of the qualities that made Egorov so admired as a Schumann player. A bit more nervous and headlong than the two recordings of the work he made in the previous two years, it is filled with ideas and fairly bursts with rhythmic vitality. The Chopin Op 25 Etudes clearly contain some very exciting and beautiful piano-playing but, unfortunately, perhaps 20 per cent of the nuances of touch and colour are lost because of recording problems that remastering could not address, exacerbated by a poorly voiced instrument. Quiet passages sound muffled and loud ones quickly begin to clatter. Paradoxically, 'Reflets dans l'eau' is less impaired, its myriad subtleties more readily discernible in a reading that is atmospheric and skilfully paced. The Egorov staple 'La campanella', taken from a concert two years earlier in the same venue, is less remarkable



Katt, aka Kateřina Chroboková, reveals her personality in her own works in a varied recital on Supraphon (review page 71)

for its technical sheen than for its beguilingly poetic approach.

The Dutch radio performances offer a greater breadth of repertoire and are perhaps more thoroughly representative of Egorov's work in that they were recorded over some 13 years. Their superior sound has, nevertheless, a slightly boxed-in quality. Egorov's way with Tchaikovsky, whom he obviously loved deeply, is especially persuasive. The Theme and Variations are fresh and great fun to listen to, presaging the fluent mastery of the three great ballets. 'Autumn Song' is represented with two recordings, from 1974 and 1987. Both are poignant; but the second, recorded when Egorov's health was in serious decline, is positively heart-rending. Dating from a period when relatively few nationalities could compete with the Soviets' idiomatic Prokofiev, this A minor Sonata is dazzlingly brilliant, with bold, Bakst-like colours, heartfelt lyricism and tensile power. Eight polite, contained Scarlatti sonatas occupy considerable real estate in the set, and Bartók's Suite Op 14 impresses more as a spirited performance drawn from a young pianist's quiver of competition-ready sure-fires than for any particular originality of concept or execution. Brahms's Op 117 Intermezzos

are suitably melancholy and characterised throughout by a lovely silvery, lean sound, judiciously pedalled. Along with the Prokofiev sonata, Ravel's *Miroirs* are the standouts of the collection, as vivid and piquant as they are exhilarating.

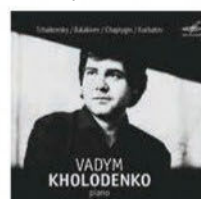
Patrick Rucker

Vadym Kholodenko

Balakirev Piano Sonata No 2 **Chaplygin Little Cyprian Music, Op 37** **Kurbatov Lost in Darkness, Op 34** **Tchaikovsky Six Pieces on a Single Theme, Op 21**

Vadym Kholodenko *pf*

Melodiya © MELCD100 2365 (70' • DDD)



Vadym Kholodenko begins this decidedly unhackneyed programme with what may be the finest recording of Balakirev's Sonata No 2 since Louis Kentner and Earl Wild. His opening fugue sings out much more than Danny Driver's, the rhapsodic interludes transpire with controlled gusto, and he matches and sometimes surpasses Wild for combined ferocity and suppleness in the Mazurka. Concerning the Intermezzo, I find Driver's steadier overall

pulse allows for stronger textural distinctions between accompaniment and melody, but Kholodenko's power and authority in the orchestrally inspired finale ultimately rule; his interlocking chords pack quite an assured punch.

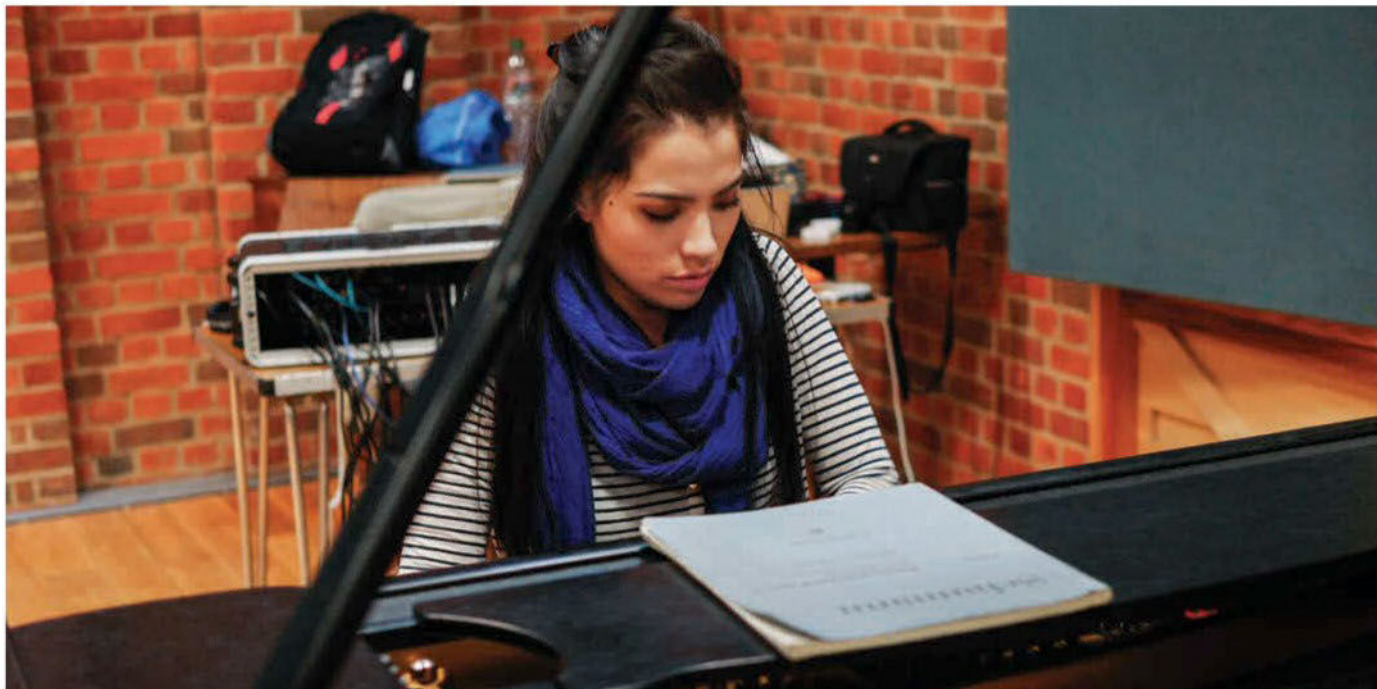
Perhaps Kholodenko's caring and thoughtful performance of Tchaikovsky's *Six Pieces on a Single Theme* will inspire more pianists to take up this underrated composition; listen to how he's internalised the Impromptu's syncopated trajectory, or his sharply defined dotted rhythms in the Scherzo.

Although no authentic folk melodies are present in Evgeny Chaplygin's *Little Cyprian Music*, the music's inherent sadness and infectious lilt holds interest – Bartók comes to mind at times. By contrast, the seven pieces making up Alexey Kurbatov's *Lost in Darkness* play the field, stylistically speaking. Write a Brahms intermezzo in the style of a Michel Legrand movie theme and you'll get the first piece. No 2 juxtaposes clotted Schumann chords with high-register Mussorgsky church bells. At first the pungent dissonances of No 6's slow chords grab my attention, yet I lose interest when they lead into ersatz Rachmaninov. However, the final movement's jarring dynamic and stylistic

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

SCHUMANN RARE, LATE AND GREAT

Harriet Smith listens to a selection of releases focusing on some lesser-known late Schumann



'An artist to watch': Catarina Grewe offers Schumann's Op 14 Sonata and Davidsbündlertänze on her new disc

The re-evaluation of Schumann's late piano music is a welcome one and the discs just keep coming. Of the six that arrived for this survey, there were no fewer than three *Ghost Variations*, two *Gesänge der Frühe* and one account of the *Six Pieces in Canonic Form*, fascinating works all of them. All three pieces appear on **Soo Park's** CD, entitled 'Last Thought', along with the *Waldszenen* and Op 111 *Fantasiestücke*, and conceptually it makes for an interesting programme. So does the fact that she plays a piano by CJ Gebauhr of around 1850, matching instrument and repertoire. There is plenty of imagination in her *Gesänge der Frühe*, and her lower-pitched instrument offers plenty of timbral variety in the different registers. She chooses an ideal tempo for the closing movement, though on occasion she is a bit too free for my taste with rubato, something that afflicts her *Ghost Variations* too. But what hampers her most is the over-reverberant acoustic, which renders the detail indistinct – a shame, as she is clearly an artist of sensitivity.

Jean-Baptiste Fonlupt tends to take the *Ghost Variations* at a faster pace than Park, giving them a winning coherence. In the *Gesänge der Frühe*, too, he's alive to the

pent-up emotionalism of the music, even if his filigree in the penultimate number doesn't match the sublime Anderszewski (Virgin/Erato, 1/11). Fonlupt imbues each piece in his mixed recital with a very distinct personality. His *Abegg Variations* have a winningly relaxed virtuosity, while the second of the Op 21 *Novelletten* has a great sense of play and the seventh dreams alluringly. My only (tiny) caveat regards a tendency to overdo the pauses in the *Arabeske's* main theme, but otherwise this is a scintillating listen.

Like Fonlupt, **Olivier Chauzu** trained at the Paris Conservatoire and he offers a disc full of rarities. If his *Ghost Variations* are less airborne than Fonlupt's, there is plenty of interest to the Schumann specialist. He begins stirring, with the main theme from the slow movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, on which Schumann wrote a series of studies that have come down to us in three different incarnations. Chauzu offers a selection from all three, making an intriguing sequence of which the penultimate variation is particularly striking. Other highlights are the *Exercice* – an early version of the Toccata – and three discarded movements from Schumann's Op 14 Sonata, which features a particularly high-energy finale. The *Variations on a*

Chopin Nocturne are less convincing, as Chauzu takes a very free approach to the opening theme. The *Schubert Variations* – Schumann's reaction to the death of the older composer – have been reconstructed by Andreas Boyde and begin with a movement familiar to us as the opening of *Carnaval*. But neither this nor Schumann's precocious arrangement of Grosheim's *Titania Overture* are more than footnotes in Schumann's output, and Chauzu, with his somewhat limited colouristic range, doesn't persuade otherwise.

The young German-Japanese pianist **Caterina Grewe** chooses the standard version of the Op 14 Sonata and gives it with notable aplomb, scarcely seeming troubled by the extreme demands of its *Prestissimo possibile* finale. As well as stamina, her playing also has the requisite liteness and elegance that Schumann demands. Though there are dozens of fine accounts of *Davidsbündlertänze* out there, hers is one full of character and she struts her way to great effect through the 'Mit Humor' third number, dispatches the driving 'Sehr rasch' (No 6) without becoming overbearing and relishes the raptness of the following number, using its pauses to compelling effect. Grewe never loses sight of the work's overarching form, and her final

number is unerringly judged and suitably rapt. Very occasionally her accentuation can sound slightly hard-toned but overall this is a fine disc and an artist to watch.

Playing a Fazioli, **Maurizio Baglini** presents Schumann's other two sonatas, and his engagement with the composer is clear from his enthusiastic booklet-notes. He's an artist with plenty of panache and a robust technique – which is just what this music demands. However, the very reverberant recorded sound makes this a tough listen (oddly enough, his previous Schumann disc for Decca suffered in the same way, though this is a different venue). He includes as an additional track the original finale of the Second Sonata, Op 22, though I wanted more of a sense of overall sweep. If the precipitous juxtapositions of the First Sonata's opening movement sound relatively underplayed, that is possibly down to the acoustic rather than the pianist. But the Toccata is too pulled about for my taste, losing a vital sense of drive.

From **Mitsuko Saruwatari**, Tokyo-born like Grewe, we get 'Schumann the Poet'. Compared to the other recitals here, she is playing absolutely key works, and the competition is ferocious. There's a nice delicacy to pieces such as 'Vogel als Prophet' in *Waldszenen* (which she takes faster than Soo Park), but there's a tendency to sound a touch careful in the more driven numbers such as 'Jäger auf der Lauer' or, in *Papillons*, the *prestissimo* Nos 2 and 9. That becomes even more of an issue in a *Kreisleriana* that sadly fails to plumb the extremes of Schumann's vision. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Schumann 'Last Thought'
Soo Park
Label-Hérison (P) LH14



Schumann Piano Works
Jean-Baptiste Fonlupt
Esprit du Piano (P) EDP03



Schumann Beethoven Studies, etc
Olivier Chauzu
Naxos (B) 8 573540



Schumann Piano Works
Caterina Grewe
KNS Classical (P) KNSA041



Schumann Piano Sonatas Nos 1 & 2
Maurizio Baglini
Decca/Discovery (P) 481 2391



Schumann 'Schumann the Poet'
Mitsuko Saruwatari
Etcetera (P) KTCI539

juxtapositions are totally convincing, especially when played with Kholodenko's concentration and commitment. In a world where high-profile competition winners trot out the same old repertoire again and again, this unusual, intelligently conceived and superbly executed and engineered recital is most welcome. **Jed Distler**

'Kätt'

JS Bach Toccata and Fugue, BWV565. Toccata, 'Dorian', BWV538 **Katt** Bogorodice Djevo. Slavkof. Variations on Veni Sancte Spiritus **Messiaen** Prière après la Communion. Messe de la Pentecôte – Communion; Sortie **Pärt** Pari Intervallo. Trivium **Katt** (Kateřina Chroboková) *org*
Supraphon (P) SU4189-2 (57) • DDD
Played on the organ of the St Willibrord Basilica, Echternach, Luxembourg



Each generation produces at least one organist who sets out to make the instrument acceptable to a new audience through a combination of outstanding technique, distinctive programming and a carefully manicured personality. The latest is Kateřina Chroboková, who goes under the moniker Katt, and whose Unique Selling Point is glamour; the cover photo shows more leg than is usual at an organ console.

In aural-only mode, Katt comes across as a remarkably strait-laced organist, delivering Bach's BWV565 Toccata with beautifully crisp articulation and a minimum of effect, especially in a fugue where echo effects are decidedly subtle. An inexplicably truncated BWV538 Toccata shows a similar clarity of touch and absence of gesture. Messiaen and Pärt come across similarly devoid of effect or gesture, although they are perhaps more earthy than spiritual, and at times sound a little hard-edged and sour on this substantial 1953 Luxembourg Klais.

Katt's personality emerges in her own three works on the disc. Never attempting to hide their improvisatory origins, and aiming for a raw spiritual intensity – something emphasised by occasional tinkling bells – two of these (*Bogorodice Djevo* and *Variations on Veni Sancte Spiritus*) take on a strangely theatrical quality when Katt starts to vocalise. Texts are included in the booklet (which also is notable for the incomprehensibility of its translated notes) but these do not seem part of the performances. Instead, Katt moans, whispers, roars, caresses and generally provides an unearthly accompaniment to some vivid organ colour. **Marc Rochester**

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Decca developments

Decca's latest new signing, the young Dutch recorder player **Lucie Horsch**, records her first album for Decca this month at the MakellaKerk in Amsterdam – a disc of Vivaldi concertos and arrangements, for which she is joined by a group of handpicked musicians including her cellist father, **Gregor Horsch**. The release is set for October. In Prague, conductor **Semyon Bychkov** (pictured) is continuing his Tchaikovsky cycle with the **Czech Philharmonic Orchestra**. They have just recorded Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 3 at the orchestra's home, the Rudolfinum; their disc of the *Pathétique* and *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy Overture is due out in October.



• Grieg from DG

Alice-Sara Ott has recorded a selection of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces* in the Emil-Berliner-Studios in Berlin. These will be coupled with the Piano Concerto, recorded in Munich in 2015 with **Esa-Pekka Salonen** and the **Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra**, on a disc due for release in September.

• Liverpooldian Spring

Vasily Petrenko and the **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra** have recorded a programme of vernal 20th-century works, built around Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. The other pieces on the disc, scheduled for release on Onyx in mid 2016, are Rachmaninov's cantata *Spring* and Debussy's *Printemps*.

• Choral news

The **Huddersfield Choral Society** under **Aiden Oliver** have been in Rochdale Town Hall recording a programme of British choral works with the organist **Thomas Trotter**. The disc is due out on Signum next year.

Colin Matthews

In the composer's 70th birthday year, Paul Griffiths looks back at the prodigious achievements of a key figure in new music

Should one have to pick a single work that exemplifies the energy, the resilience, the fitness, the expressive urge and the colour of Colin Matthews's music, it would probably be *Broken Symmetry*, which he wrote for the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1991-92. Then in his mid-forties, he had long earned a solid place among British composers of his gifted generation, and yet this piece manifested a supreme virtuosity that his earlier music had not fully prepared. In its forcefully motivated speed, this is music that is emphatically going somewhere, and its rampage does not depend on restoring the old tonal tensions and metrical directives. Matthews makes pulse work for its life through supple, irregular rhythms, enforced by pressures from within a fully chromatic harmony, even if in his music there is always a sense of place, of being at home or away, within that harmony. This is music big in its presence, too – wild with alarm calls, mighty with the atmosphere of machinery, catastrophic in its climaxes and sombre at its close.

In any reasonable world, *Broken Symmetry* would be an orchestral regular. However, the BBC Philharmonic's performance at Salford in June, given to celebrate Matthews's 70th birthday, was the first anywhere since the score was new, almost a quarter-century ago. So much the more need, then, for recordings to keep this extraordinary

Tippett is deep in Matthews's creative springs, along with his inheritances from Britten, for whom he was a musical aide

output before us, and happily *Broken Symmetry* is available on disc, superlatively conducted by Oliver Knussen and accompanied by two crucial pieces Matthews wrote on the way to it. One is *Suns Dance*, which he composed for the London Sinfonietta in 1984-85 and which came as a breakthrough into a world of vaulting velocity; the other is his orchestral Fourth Sonata, written a decade previously and the work that made his name.

The Fourth Sonata, which suitably opens as if instituting a whole creative lifetime, indicates what a rush to the blood New York minimalism must have been for the young Matthews (perhaps the previous three sonatas, unpublished, had followed that enthusiasm more wholeheartedly) as well as the stake he had in symphonism as it had been understood by Mahler and Tippett – both, as much as Reich and Glass, masters of the ostinato when they wanted to be. Mahler was in Matthews's bones from his time as teenage assistant



Unstoppable at 70: Colin Matthews, composer and founder of NMC Recordings

to Deryck Cooke in making the draft of that composer's 10th Symphony performable. Tippett, the bound of Tippett, is also deep in his creative springs, along with his inheritances from Britten, for whom he was a musical aide at the time of *Death in Venice* and other late works. His earlier teachers, too, Nicholas Maw and Arnold Whittall, would have led him to a path at once British and wider, also traditional and wider.

During the decade between the Fourth Sonata and *Suns Dance* – the decade, roughly, of his thirties – Matthews created two large-scale symphonic pieces, *Landscape* and his First Cello Concerto (which was also his first BBC Proms commission). Both are hugely imposing, *Landscape* remarkable for the awesome weight it develops through a threefold process of growth and dissolve, the concerto putting an urgent opening movement up against a desolate slow finale. From these years, too, came chamber works, including a superb Divertimento for double string quartet, which Matthews wrote for the 1982 Aldeburgh Festival, and which suggests what Britten might have been writing had he followed his intention of studying with Berg. Matthews's attachment to Aldeburgh had continued after Britten's death through his work with Imogen Holst, and he was later to become guardian of Britten and Pears's home in Aldeburgh. Editions and arrangements of works from Britten's estate followed, too.

It was with Imogen Holst's enthusiastic backing – and, after her death, with financial support from the Holst Foundation –



MATTHEWS FACTS

Born 1946, London**Studied** Nottingham University (Classics, but also composition with Arnold Whittall); private lessons with Nicholas Maw**Career** Assistant to Benjamin Britten (1972-76) and Imogen Holst (1971-84); continuing relationship with Aldeburgh; executive producer of NMC Recordings (1988-present)**Key moments** First performances of *Landscape* (1983, Elder), *Suns Dance* (1985, Knussen), *Cortège* (1989, Haitink), *Broken Symmetry* (1992, Knussen), Horn Concerto (2001, Watkins / Salonen), *Reflected Images* (2003, Tilson Thomas), *Turning Point* (2006, Stenz), Violin Concerto (2009, Josefowicz / Knussen), *Traces Remain* (2014, Oramo)**Publisher** Faber Music

that Matthews was able in 1988 to establish NMC Recordings, which soon became, as older companies moved out of the field, the primary outlet for new British music in recorded form. With early releases ranging from Andrzej Panufnik

to James Dillon, the label embraced composers far from any mainstream; by now there are more than 200 in the NMC catalogue, most of them produced by Matthews.

All this work on behalf of Britten's unearthed compositions, of Aldeburgh and of NMC did nothing, however, to interrupt the flow of Matthews's own music. With few vocal pieces to his name up to now, he produced an almost hour-long narrative of a conquistador expedition, *The Great Journey* (1988), scored for bass-baritone with eight-piece ensemble and giving some hint of what a Matthews opera might be like – a hint still unrealised, though much more recently his World War I reminder *No Man's Land* (2011), setting poems by Christopher Reid for tenor, baritone and orchestra, showed the dramatic potential undiminished. Perhaps, like his admired Elliott Carter, he is waiting until he has 90 in his sights. Or perhaps he is happy with the theatre that the concert hall can become in such a work as his Horn Concerto (2001), where the hunt calls, the heraldry and the heartfulness of the solo instrument are all enhanced by its progress to join its companion horns offstage.

The year after *The Great Journey*, Matthews wrote *Hidden Variables*, possibly an attempt to exorcise by spot-on imitation the games of the minimalists – though if so the effort failed, for back they came in *Machines and Dreams* (1990), an early Michael Tilson Thomas commission for the LSO which required the orchestra to be joined by children on toy instruments. Working latterly with US orchestras,

Tilson Thomas has remained a strong Matthews supporter, along with, on this side of the Atlantic, Oliver Knussen and Sir Mark Elder, both of whom have been conducting Matthews premieres since the 1980s.

Elder at the Hallé has been responsible this century for commissioning a quite different Matthews-Reid collaboration, the children's entertainment *Alphabicycle Order* (2007), and also orchestrations of all 24 of Debussy's Piano Preludes (2001-06). This fruitful period has also seen orchestral arrangements of songs by Sibelius, Fauré and Schubert – and there was a different approach to another composer in *Pluto* (2000), with which Matthews saluted Holst's most popular work.

It would not be strange if the long engagement with, in particular, Debussy's music – continued with a realisation of an early symphonic movement by the composer – were having some effect on Matthews's own, and perhaps one can hear that in the eerie atmosphere of *No Man's Land* or in the first movement of the Violin Concerto (2009), if it is a fusion with Matthews's earlier style that produces this Szymanowskian luminosity and songfulness. The start of the second movement suggests this is going to be another onward–still diptych, like the First Cello Concerto, but the music steadily gains speed and moves through territory that again reveals Matthews's sense of orchestral drama.

This unforgettable concerto tops the bill of a new release for the composer's 70th, which also features his Second Cello Concerto. What will stun most listeners, though, is surely *Cortège* (1988), an ominous, drum-beaten slow movement pressing on for almost 20 minutes, through a terrifying climax where the orchestra stops to think, if it can still think – and it can. Matthews has spoken of his obsession with the First World War. It is an obsession with disaster, and memory, and regrowth. **G**

COLIN MATTHEWS ON RECORD

Three albums best summarising Matthews's output

**Fourth Sonata. Suns Dance. Broken Symmetry**

London Sinfonietta / Oliver Knussen

DG (1/96)

The place to start, with what was effectively Matthews's Op 1, followed on this recording by two storming pieces from the composer's full maturity.

**Landscape. Cello Concerto No 1. Hidden Variables. Memorial. Quatrain. Machines and Dreams**

Artists incl Alexander Baillie vc Berlin Radio Symphony

Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, London

Sinfonietta, John Carewe, Michael Tilson Thomas

NMC (5/96)

A double album, with outstanding performances of two big symphonic scores from the early 1980s, plus a selection of pieces – the strong and the humorous – from a decade later.

**Violin Concerto. Cortège. Cello Concerto No 2**

Artists incl Leila Josefowicz vn Anssi Karttunen vc

BBC SO, Riccardo Chailly, Oliver Knussen, Rumon Gamba

NMC (released on June 24, 2016)

Josefowicz is superb – radiant and pointed – in the concerto written for her; *Cortège* is colossal; and Karttunen dexterously finds his way through the Second Cello Concerto.

Vocal



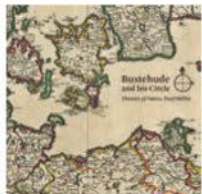
Tim Ashley listens to a recital of Reger songs from Sophie Bevan: *'Brahmsian folksongs rub shoulders with exercises in extreme chromaticism that rival early Schoenberg'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



Alexandra Coghlan reviews a programme of English madrigals: *'Gough pitches the performances exactly right, allowing the music to speak for itself without undue intervention.'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**

'Buxtehude and his Circle'

Bruhns *De profundis clamavi* **Buxtehude** *Gott, hilf mir*, BuxWV34; *Jesu, meine Freude*, BuxWV60 **Geist** *Die mit Tränen säen*. Dixit Dominus Domino meo **Förster** *Confitebor tibi Domine* **Tunder** *Dominus illuminatio mea* **Theatre of Voices / Paul Hillier** **Dacapo** 6 220634 (75' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Paul Hillier and his Theatre of Voices explore the circle of church organists and

composers in northern Germany and the Baltic region that were all linked in some way to Buxtehude. One of his possible teachers in Copenhagen was the Danish court kapellmeister Kaspar Förster, whose psalm *Confitebor tibi Domine* offers a hint of what the composer might have learnt in Rome from Carissimi. Another of Buxtehude's probable teachers was the organist Johann Lorentz, whose successor Christian Geist is represented by the paradoxical mood of sensuality and mournfulness in *Die mit Tränen säen*. In 1668 Buxtehude succeeded the recently deceased Frans Tunder as kantor at the Marienkirche in Lübeck (and the new organist married his predecessor's daughter), and Tunder's *Dominus illuminatio mea* is given a lightly intimate performance.

One of Buxtehude's pupils was Nicolaus Bruhns, whose magnificent *De profundis clamavi* for solo bass is sung with ardent gravitas and virtuosity by Jakob Bloch Jespersen, and the violin ritornellos are played exquisitely by Jesenka Balic Zunic and Karolina Radziej. Buxtehude's own chorale-based trio setting of *Jesu, meine Freude* is sung and played beautifully. *Gott, hilf mir* is conceived on a more elaborate scale; its five-part vocal ensemble and five-part strings convey the emotional weight of the penitential cry for God to save the suffering soul, and Hillier's lovely performance is on a par with the very finest that the Buxtehude discography has to offer.

David Vickers

Caron

Missa *L'homme armé* – Kyrie. **Missa** *Jhesus autem transiens* – Gloria. **Missa** *Sanguis sanctorum* – Credo. **Missa** *Clemens et benigna* – Sanctus. **Missa** *Accueille m'a la belle* – Agnus Dei. **Missa** *Accueille m'a la belle*. **Le despourveu infortuné**. **Corps contre corps**. **Hélas que pourra devenir mon cœur**

Huelgas Ensemble / Paul Van Nevel **Deutsche Harmonia Mundi** 88875 14347-2 (55' • DDD • T/t)



Born in Amiens and named after his town's patron saint, Firminus Caron (c1440–after

1480) was a contemporary of Johannes Tinctoris and Loyset Compère. Little is known about his life but what we do know, and the fact that this disc exists at all, is due to the work of those few tireless musicologists who do so much to bring 15th-century music to our attention. Paul Van Nevel's disc comprises a composite Mass – movements from five of Caron's four-part cantus firmus cycles, including, as one would expect, a *L'homme armé* setting – a chanson and three rondeaux.

As ever with the Huelgas Ensemble, the unique warm sound, characterised by soft, dark vowels, creates a pleasing sense of unity across the whole album and delivers a smooth and intimate listening experience; Galaxy to the Dairy Milk of British counterparts, if you like. Yet this smooth tone is far from monotonous. Van Nevel frequently draws on groups of solo voices to highlight differences in texture so that his performances of Caron's Mass movements are characterised by such interplay and further strengthened by a bold, firm plainsong line clearly etched into the polyphonic web. Such a staunch cantus firmus is particularly noticeable in the *Credo*. Caron's surprisingly smooth polyphonic garlands create a flow and fluidity that inspire this ensemble, and when the polyphony cadences they then delight in his remarkably long final chords.

The sublime and despairing rondeau *Le despourveu infortuné*, one of the most popular in the second half of the 15th century, showcases the ensemble at their best, mourning and yearning with wonderfully judged delicate vocal lines cascading like gentle tears. The contrast could not be greater with their grittier, wittier tone in the delightfully smutty *Corps contre corps*, where sequential vocal entries reveal a mischievous plan: no-holes-barred [*sic*] lusty singing from the lower voices and a smooth upper line which makes sense only when you read the text closely...

Edward Breen

Clinio • Heroldt

Clinio *Passio Secundum Joannem* **Heroldt** *Matthäuspassion*

Theresa Dlouhy-Staber *sop* **Terry Wey, Michael Gerzabek** *countertens* **Michael Paumgarten, Christian Paumgarten** *tens* **Ulfried Staber** *bass* **Ensemble Triagonale / Michael Paumgarten** **CPO** 6 CPO555 025-2 (55' • DDD • T/t)



Lassus, Victoria and Schütz composed the only Passion settings before Bach that

retain currency. This enterprising release presents two still earlier versions by composers working in the last decade of the 16th century and proving that, when it comes to Passions, small can still be beautiful and meaningful.

Working in the Lutheran chapels of Carinthia, Johannes Heroldt (or Herold, c1550–1603) produced a motet Passion which begins (as did Bach) in the Upper Room and ends, not a quarter of an hour later, before the Deposition. Interleaved with the recitation are two chorale texts sung homophonically, the first being 'O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde gross', set to a tune familiar to anyone who has sung 'All creatures of our God and King'. The motet sections are mostly homophonic but not without rhythmic variety as they slip in and out of triple metre, with distinct



'On a par with the very finest in the Buxtehude discography': Theatre of Voices and Paul Hillier have recorded music by the Lübeck master and his circle

registers of texture assigned to different actors in the drama.

The *St John Passion* by Teodoro Clinio (*d*1602) is a less rewarding affair which follows the same model as Lassus, being sung on a recitation tone by a tenor with brief polyphonic interventions to represent the crowd, Christ, Pilate and so on. As a polyphonist, Clinio (an ordained musician working in Treviso and its environs) is not so affective as Lassus, but there remains much to be done in the way of characterising each voice without doing violence to the sure progress of the polyphony. The six voices of Ensemble Triagonale (one soprano, the rest men) are entirely stylish in the matter, discreet in attack and cleanly tuned. The tenor to whom the recitation has been assigned (who may be the ensemble's director; it isn't clear) is a little dry – not inappropriately so – but sensitive to the rhythm of the story as the pace slows and the perspective widens towards the climax.

CPO's presentation is exemplary. There are useful essays giving historical context to each piece, sung texts and translations, session photographs and brief biographies that actually tell us something about the singers rather than offering the usual tedious list of their engagements. **Peter Quantrill**

Dufay

'Les Messes à teneur'

Masses – Ave regina caelorum; Ecce ancilla Domini/Beata es Maria; L'homme armé; Se la face ay pale. Ave regina caelorum III. Se la face ay pale

Cut Circle / Jesse Rodin

Musique en Wallonie ② MEW1577/8 (137 • DDD • T/T)



This is a red-letter day: at last we have uniform and sensible recordings of the four great cantus firmus Masses that are more or less all we have from the last 20 or so years of Dufay's life. As luck would have it, these Masses are not just all top-flight masterpieces but all slightly different in layout and approach: the *Missa Se la face ay pale* is built on the tenor of a much earlier polyphonic song of his own; the *Missa L'homme armé* is probably the first of the 40-odd known Masses built on that monophonic song of unknown origin; the *Missa Ecce ancilla/Beata es* uses two different chants; and the *Missa Ave regina caelorum* uses the chant in both the lower voices. Between them these works marvellously

chart the state of the cyclic Mass in the third quarter of the 15th century.

The ensemble Cut Circle – already famous for their earlier double-disc set of Josquin and De Orto, also for *Musique en Wallonie* – comprises just eight singers, with two women on the top voice. Dufay would have had men on top, but Carolann Buff and Mary Gerbi are so good that nobody will regret their contribution. These are all top-rate singers with pure and excellently focused voices: every one of them appears here as a soloist in one of the duet sections, and the intonation and ensemble are beyond reproach.

What some listeners may find a stumbling block is the speeds Jesse Rodin adopts. For example, the *Kyrie* of the *Missa Se la face ay pale* comes in at 3'09", far faster than any of the 12 other recordings apart from Thomas Binkley in 1987 (3'04") and almost double the speed of what I still think of as one of the most marvellous Dufay records ever, directed by David Munrow in 1973 (5'07"). Not all the movements sound quite so hectic but most are the quickest available, and to my ears one consequence is that rather too much of the detail is swallowed. Some may also find that the lack of space rather trivialises the music and occasionally results in the singers putting too much effort into

the sound. But it does at the same time make it easier for the long phrases to hang together and for the movements to come across as coherent music units.

There are many other recordings of all these works, but surely all serious collectors will want this issue of all four works, beautifully sung, beautifully recorded, beautifully presented and always exhilarating. **David Fallows**

Harvey

The Annunciation. Come, Holy Ghost. I love the Lord. Laus Deo. Magnificat and Nunc dimittis. Missa brevis. Praise ye the Lord. The royal banners forward go. Toccata

The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge /

Andrew Nethsingha with

Edward Picton-Turbervill *org*

Signum © SIGCD456 (60' • DDD • T/t)



This is an essential disc not only for admirers of Jonathan Harvey's work in general but for

all those interested in contemporary sacred music. Harvey stretched the limits of Anglican church music in a way not seen, really, since Tippett's Evening Canticles from 1961, but did so with regularity and consistency. I recall fellow church music enthusiasts in the early 1980s making real (and largely successful) efforts to come to grips with this music, in a way they would never have done for the rest of Harvey's output; works such as *I love the Lord* were totems of the acceptable face of modern church music. But his work has never achieved a regular foothold in the worship of the Anglican Church, and in part this must be attributed to the technical difficulty of some of it. This outstanding recording may help to change that.

The relatively straightforward *I love the Lord* (1977) is in fact what opens the disc, preparing the way for a staggering performance of the *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis*, written the following year. The *Magnificat* is epic in scope; it is hard to believe that it lasts just under eight minutes. Certainly these are difficult works, including various vocal techniques (whispering, glissandos, percussive repetition of consonants, etc) hardly common in the normal run of church music, but the investment the choir has clearly put into them really gives extraordinary results. As Andrew Nethsingha writes in his detailed and reflective notes, 'Some contemporary music experts have considered Harvey's church music to be of lesser importance than his instrumental works. I want to stress

how imaginative, innovative and courageous Harvey was in pushing the boundaries of church music, without ever losing the intensity of spirituality which underpins all the great religious music.' Precisely so, though it was of course essential that Harvey be able to write for a choir of sufficient technical ability to cope with his demands – and this was the great contribution of Martin Neary, with his pioneering work in commissioning new work at Winchester – and Harvey was never a straightforward Christian believer, as Nethsingha also acknowledges.

The disc also includes stunning performances of *Come, Holy Ghost* (1984), another of the composer's works that has proved more popular, though its technical demands should not be underestimated; the dazzling *Missa brevis* (1995); and the very moving *The Annunciation* (2011), written right at the end of Harvey's life for this choir, as well as two exuberant works for solo organ (the Toccata also employs tape) performed by Edward Picton-Turbervill. This recording is outstanding on every count: remarkable and under-performed repertoire, beautifully performed and recorded. I wonder if St John's might next consider other works from Harvey's non-liturgical output, such as the wonderful *Forms of Emptiness* and *Sobre un Éxtasis de Alta Contemplación*? One can hope.

Ivan Moody

Kõrvits

'Mirror'

Kõrvits *Reflections from a Plain*^a. *Labyrinths*^b.

Seven Dreams of Seven Birds^c. *Laul*^d Kõrvits/

Tormis *Plainland Song*^e. *The Last Ship*^f

^aKadri Voorand *sgr* ^{acd}Anja Lechner *vc*

^eTõnu Kõrvits *kannel* ^{acdef}Estonian Philharmonic

Chamber Choir; ^{bcd}Tallinn Chamber Orchestra /

Tõnu Kaljuste

ECM New Series © 481 2303 (63' • DDD)

Recorded live at Tallinn Methodist Church,

February 6, 2013



Some readers will have more experience of Estonia than I do, but fresh from a first

exploration of Tallinn and the Lohusalu peninsula I was struck by the area's juxtaposition of ice-white Nordic modernity with the medieval. This recording, made live at Tallinn's angular, modernist (and white) Methodist Church, would suggest Tõnu Kõrvits's music has that same combination at its heart.

Kõrvits draws extensively on Estonian folk melodies and much of his writing is

shaded by Estonia's recent choral prowess, which itself has roots in the country's long tradition of massed singing. From the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir and others, we now recognise the sound as a professional one: blend that hardly distinguishes between male and female voices; an ease with extremes of volume; and a rich, sonorous delivery that's a choral cousin of Leopold Stokowski's 'free-bowing' principle. Kõrvits's choral works are built on these things, and on that typically Estonian keening atmosphere, potent modality, deep history and present pain. Maybe, in *Laul* ('Song') for cello and strings, there's a dalliance with the dancing melancholy of Latin America.

Those Estonian elements are evidenced in *Reflections from a Plain*, Kõrvits's fantasy on a song by Veljo Tormis, for choir and cello. A string orchestra joins that mix for *Seven Dreams of Seven Birds*, formally satisfying miniatures in which choral clustering and intoning is punctuated by an avian cello, happy to peck at its own feathers and feet. I found Kõrvits's seven *Labyrinths*, essentially harmonic studies, brilliant at their best but occasionally too exercise-like. Kõrvits patterns and layers where he can, never more effectively than in the gothic oar-strokes of *The Last Ship*. ECM applies its trademark vaseline to the lens, perhaps a little too much for Kõrvits's take on Tormis's *Plainland Song*, in which the composer accompanies vocalist Kadri Voorand on the *kannel*, Estonia's contribution to the Baltic psalter family.

Andrew Mellor

Lobo • Guerrero

Guerrero *Maria Magdalene et altera Maria*

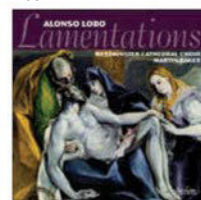
Lobo *Lamentations*. *Missa Maria Magdalene*.

O quam suavis est, Domine. Regina caeli

The Choir of Westminster Cathedral /

Martin Baker

Hyperion © CDA68106 (69' • DDD • T/t)



The Choir of Westminster Cathedral have a long and illustrious

association with late-Renaissance Iberian polyphony. This new disc of works by Alonso Lobo, Victoria's contemporary, can be seen as the latest in an extremely distinguished lineage, especially welcome since it champions a composer still under-represented on disc.

Lobo was a choirboy under Francisco Guerrero at Seville Cathedral and the *Missa Maria Magdalene* is based on his teacher's motet. Readers may recognise



The Choir of St John's Cambridge celebrate music by Jonathan Harvey for the first release on their own label

these works from The Tallis Scholars' 1997 recording, yet despite similar tempi the larger forces of Westminster Cathedral Choir lend them a greater sense of grandeur. Indeed, among the most admirable qualities of both groups, instantly apparent when these albums are compared, is their ability to generate polyphonic momentum and an unmistakably personal sound. For Westminster Cathedral Choir this generally means that tempi are on the slow side, dictated by their cavernous home acoustic and also by their richer low voices. Here, the great polyphonic arches of Lobo's Mass can feel slightly overwhelming; but, as ever with this choir, the performance is keenly assured and the Hyperion team has produced a wonderfully atmospheric recording.

Nothing, however, will prepare listeners for the beauty of Lobo's *Lamentations*. Those who know them from Bruno Turner's 2002 recording with *Musica Reservata* de Barcelona (La Ma de Guido) will find this performance statelier. This is a good thing: as the cycle unfolds it becomes apparent that Lobo uses the Hebrew letters as elaborate weeping gestures, a point made by Bruno Turner in his booklet-notes. Listen especially to the first setting of 'Iod' (tr 14) as a heart-

stopping example of the famous Westminster Cathedral treble sound. This, for me, is as good as it gets both in terms of performance and in terms of a school of polyphony beyond the works of Victoria. Elsewhere, Lobo's animated word-setting in the motet *O quam suavis est, Domine* displays a quick-witted urgency that provides welcome changes of texture. **Edward Breen**

Lamentations – selected comparison:

Musica Reservata, Turner (LAMA) LMG2045

Mondonville

'Grands motets'

Cantate Domino. De profundis.

Magnus Dominus. Nisi Dominus

Chantal Santon-Jeffery, Daniela Skorka *sops*

Mathias Vidal, Jeffrey Thompson *tens*

Alain Buet *bass Purcell Choir;*

Orfeo Orchestra / György Vashegyi

Glossa © (P) GCD923508 (96' • DDD • T/t)



Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville, a violinist and composer prominent in Parisian musical life in the mid-18th century, was among the last composers to contribute significantly to the genre of the *grand motet*;

indeed, his examples of these large-scale choral psalm-settings, usually created for the Royal Chapel at Versailles but popular in the concert hall as well, were among the most successful of the time. Their ability to please a crowd undoubtedly rested in their sweet melody, their imposing, sometimes Handelian choruses, and (perhaps above all) their enthusiastic pictorialism: in *Nisi Dominus*, one of the four motets recorded here, we get in quick succession a drowsy bassoon tucking in the Chosen Ones' virtuous slumber, archers' arrows whizzing through choir and orchestra and the noisy knocking of the Lord's enemies at the city gate. It is surface stuff compared to the noble motets of Lully and Lalande, or Rameau's beautiful *In convertendo*, but these pieces are well-written enough – *De profundis* establishes a satisfying trajectory from penitential to optimistic to clear-eyed glance towards the grave – and are pretty much impossible to dislike.

Nine of Mondonville's *grands motets* survive, and this release adds *Cantate Domino* and *Nisi Dominus* to the seven already spread across discs by Les Arts Florissants (Erato, 10/97), New College Choir (Hyperion, 11/88) and the Ensemble Baroque de Limoges (Naïve). The performances are stylish and awake to the

Henry Du Mont

O Mysterium

Motets & Élévations

pour la Chapelle de Louis XIV

Ensemble Correspondances
Sébastien Daucé



HMC 902241

'La transparence et l'éclat'

For twenty years (from 1663 to 1683) Henry Du Mont directed the music of the Sun King's chapel. For the daily Mass heard there he built up a new musical repertory consisting of motets for full chorus and more intimate pieces for solo voices. The former aimed to transpose to the context of the 'ordinary' the format of the large-scale works conceived for extraordinary ceremonies. Sébastien Daucé presents an innovative approach to these 'grands motets' that at once links specific musical features with historical data and reveals all their beauties in every detail.

music's expressive possibilities but fall a little short when it comes to technical polish: the Purcell Choir (Hungarian, despite their name) lack incisiveness in the inner parts and precision in passagework, and are sometimes sluggish at pick-ups; and although there are accomplished solos from *haute-contre* Mathias Vidal and soprano Daniela Skorka, some of the other solo singing is not entirely comfortable. An acceptable introduction to Mondonville, then, but Les Arts Florissants' more focused and firmly sung selection (*De profundis* plus two others) makes a better listen.

Lindsay Kemp

Reger

Drei Motetten, Op 110.

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden

Sabine Czinczel *mez* Johannes Kaleschke *ten*

SWR Vocal Ensemble, Stuttgart / Frieder Bernius

Carus © CARUS83 288 (59' • DDD • T/t)

Reger

Auferstanden, auferstanden. Meinen Jesum
lass ich nicht. O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden.

O wie selig seid ihr doch, ihr Frommen.

Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her

Dorothea Wagner *sop* Marie Henriette Reinhold

contr Florian Sievers *ten* Michael Schönheit *org*

Gundel Jannemann-Fischer *ob* Rainer Hücke *db*

Reinhold Quartet; Gewandhaus Childrens' Chorus

/ Frank-Steffen Elster; Gewandhaus Chorus /

Gregor Meyer

CPO © CPO777 984-2 (71' • DDD • T/t)



Reger's Op 110 motets belong to a select group of a *cappella* works (*Friede auf Erden*, *Figure humaine*, Jolivet's *Epithalamium* and Strauss's *Deutsche Motette*) whose prodigious challenges place them out of reach of all but the most proficient vocal ensembles. However, as the list above should indicate, the effort taken both to master them and pay them attention brings commensurate rewards. In the descending chromatic gloom which opens No 1, 'Mein Odem ist schwach', Brahms's own trio of Op 110 motets meet their *Götterdämmerung*.

The four-movement structure mirrors Job rousing himself from despair to hope. A fugue for his 'heedlessly wrangling' comforters is brought to a dramatic standstill by a chorale, which in turn cedes to a patiently contrapuntal setting of 'I know that my Redeemer liveth': intricate but not a bar too long, at least not in these

superbly assured performances by the SWR Vokalensemble. Doubtless the fugues (one of hair-raising length and complexity closes the second motet) are instrumentally conceived but the singers betray no lack of sympathy or stamina.

Without pushing on the tempo or whipping up fake pathos, Frieder Bernius extracts every last drop of juice from Reger's word-setting. Just a little air between the notes for 'My days are cut off' makes all the difference to both texture and sense, where a previous recording under Hans-Christoph Rademann (also on Carus) takes the phrase in one legato breath. That was with the larger NDR Chorus, who more nearly approach the forces Reger had in mind, but sheer volume is a sacrifice worth making for choral singing that finds the centre and stays there. The slow movement of the second cantata is a hymn to rest in time of trouble: simple, humble and heart-stoppingly lovely. Written by an English or American composer, it would gain the same airplay as Lauridsen and Pärt.

A brief but helpful booklet-note in the CPO disc of chorale cantatas suggests that *Auferstanden, Auferstanden* is unfinished because the composer 'had lost interest in writing such deliberately simple music'. It does not make a promising start to the disc. Placed second is the masterpiece of the set, *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden* for Good Friday, but the Carus performance is immediately preferable. Both pitch and overall presence are more clearly focused, the obligato oboe and violin lines are wrapped sinuously around the homophonic chorale harmonisations, the brief vocal solos are more assured and Bernius projects a sense that the piece matters to him.

The remaining chorale cantatas also unite the full musical resources of a church (congregation, young choir, organist and talented instrumentalists) in presenting long chorale texts with ingenious variety if not consistent inspiration. For those who associate Reger with brain-melting contrapuntal intricacy, the disc will come as a surprise, and maybe a pleasant one: spring water after the single malt of the Op 110 motets. **Peter Quantrill**

Reger

Mein Traum, Op 31 No 5. Unbegehrt, Op 31 No 3.

Flieder, Op 35 No 4. Volkslied, Op 37 No 2.

Glückes genug, Op 37 No 3. Zwischen zwei

Nächten, Op 43 No 1. Meinem Kinde, Op 43 No 3.

Wiegenlied, Op 43 No 5. Sag es nicht, Op 43

No 8. Am Dorfsee, Op 48 No 6. Träume, träume,

du mein süßes Leben! (Wiegenlied), Op 51 No 3.

Zwei Gänse, Op 55 No 8. Viola d'amour, Op 55

No 11. Waldseligkeit, Op 62 No 2. Sehnsucht,

Op 66 No 1. Morgen!, Op 66 No 10.

Kindergeschichte, Op 66 No 12. Äolsharfe, Op 75
No 11. Hat gesagt - bleibt's nicht dabei, Op 75
No 12. Du meines Herzes Krönelein, Op 76 No 1.
Waldeinsamkeit, Op 76 No 3. Wenn die Linde
blüht, Op 76 No 4. Glück, Op 76 No 6. In einem
Rosengärtelein, Op 76 No 18. Des Kindes Gebet,
Op 76 No 22. Die Mutter spricht, Op 76 No 28.
Das Wölklein, Op 76 No 33. Mittag, Op 76 No 35.
Schelmenliedchen, Op 76 No 52. Mariä
Wiegenlied, Op 76 No 52. Mausefängen, Op 76
No 58. Zum Schlafen, Op 76 No 59. Ehre sei Gott
in der Höhe! (Weihnachtslied)

Sophie Bevan *sop* Malcolm Martineau *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68057 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Reger wrote some 300 songs during the course of his career, very few of which form

part of the regular repertoire. Sophie Bevan and Malcolm Martineau offer a fine selection presented in chronological order, with the exception of the 1905 'Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe!' (more a chorale prelude for voice and piano than a song), which is placed at the end to form a grand finale. In terms of content, the disc is revelatory. As one might expect from a composer who saw no conflict between post-Wagnerian methods and back-to-Bach classicism, Reger casts his stylistic net wide, with fascinating results.

Brahmsian folksongs such as 'Mausefängen' rub shoulders with exercises in extreme chromaticism ('Unbegehrt', for example) that rival early Schoenberg. Reger's fondness for Wolf is very apparent in 'Viola d'amour', though songs such as 'In einem Rosengärtelein' are effectively early music transcriptions, their austere beauty pre-empting those of Dallapiccola. He was primarily drawn to contemporary poetry – plenty of Richard Dehmel, for instance – and occasionally his choice of texts criss-crosses with Strauss. Reger's 'Morgen!', in which melodic and harmonic coherence gradually emerge from an unsettling chromatic fog, won't eclipse Strauss's iconic setting, though 'Träume, träume, du mein süßes Leben' runs its Straussian counterpart close.

Sadly, however, the disc is less than ideal in terms of performance. The sessions took place in June 2013 and April 2015. We're not told what was recorded when; but while Martineau's playing is consistently beautiful, Bevan can be diquietingly variable. Her commitment is never in doubt, and the way she sings off the line as much as the text admirably demonstrates that Reger could be a melodist of the highest order. But the vocal quality itself is

inconsistent. She's at her best in the extracts from the big Op 76 set, where her voice is nicely steady, and she floats high *pianissimos* in a most beguiling way. Elsewhere, however, her tone lacks lustre, and we're all too frequently aware of a throb in the sound. 'Zwischen zwei Nächten' is very uncomfortable, but ideally needs a Wagnerian. Some of the inequalities elsewhere can't, I'm afraid, be explained away by arguing she is over-taxed by her material. The disc affords invaluable insights into Reger himself, but one wishes it were better overall. **Tim Ashley**

Rutter

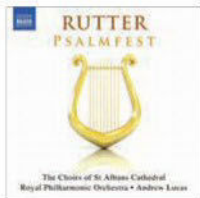
Psalmfest^a. This is the day^b. Lord, thou hast been our refuge^c. Psalm 150^d

^aElizabeth Cragg *sop* ^aPascal Charbonneau *ten*

^cMike Allen *tpt* ^{cd}Tom Winpenny *org* **St Albans Cathedral Choir and Abbey Girls Choir**; ^{abd}Royal

Philharmonic Orchestra / **Andrew Lucas**

Naxos © 8 573394 (72' • DDD • T)



Fans of John Rutter will welcome this premiere recording of his *Psalmfest*, a

collection of seven of his existing psalm anthems plus two new compositions. Those who are less enamoured of his unashamedly user-friendly musical style might still wish to acknowledge his superb craftsmanship, resulting in intelligent, imaginative and varied settings of words from the Psalms of David. The spirit of Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells is evident in the harmonic language and choral textures, while the lively rhythms and quasi-pianistic accompaniments reveal the influence of Britten and Bernstein.

The excellent singing of the St Albans Cathedral choirs combines brightness of sound with crystal-clear diction. The two soloists are also very good, although listeners may prefer the flowing, seamless legato of Elizabeth Cragg to the slightly more articulated phrasing of Pascal Charbonneau. The singers are well matched by the brilliantly executed accompaniments of the RPO, whose splendid playing highlights Rutter's colourful and glittering orchestration. Just occasionally in louder passages the orchestra are a little too heavy for the voices, and perhaps a reduced instrumentation might have been better-suited to a cathedral choir of 55 singers. Nevertheless, balance and ensemble are, on the whole, impeccable, apart from the first movement of *Psalmfest*, 'O be joyful in the Lord' (the quickest item on this disc), where the orchestra are sometimes marginally

ahead of the singers. The recording is of a high quality but aims for clarity at the expense of atmosphere, so one is unaware of the large spaces and warm acoustic of St Albans Abbey.

Overall, then, an enjoyable CD, with a happy union between the enduring words of the psalms and Rutter's equally timeless, evergreen music. **Christopher Nickol**

Schubert

Alinde, D904. Am Bach im Frühling, D361. An den Tod, D518. An die Leier, D737. Fischerweise, D881. Die Gebüsche, D646. Geheimes, D719. Gruppe aus dem Tartarus, D583. Im Abendrot, D799. Im Freien, D880. Der Kampf, D594. Das Lied im Grünen, D917. Memnon, D541. Die Taubenpost, D965a. Verklärung, D59. Der Wanderer an den Mond, D870. Wiedersehen, D855. Der Zwerg, D771

Benjamin Appl *bar* **Graham Johnson** *pf*

Wigmore Hall Live (M) WHLIVE0082

(72' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live, March 27, 2015



Just a couple of months ago, Richard Fairman welcomed Benjamin Appl's first

fully fledged recital disc, a collection of Heine settings on Champs Hill Records, and hailed the young German baritone as 'the current front-runner in the generation of Lieder singers'. This Wigmore Hall recital serves emphatically to underline that point, and, with Graham Johnson as a supportive and inspiring partner at the piano, it sees Appl in even more natural-sounding and impressive form.

His instinctive feel for these songs is immediately striking and manifests itself in the sort of artlessness that distinguishes the finest Lieder singers: a lack of tension, an easy relationship with the poetry, a confidence in the words and Schubert's melodies to communicate with nothing but the gentlest helping interpretative hand. The voice, which occasionally felt pushed and 'manufactured' on the earlier disc, is here a great deal more relaxed. Appl's is a light, honey-coloured baritone with a welcome hint of woodiness, and he deploys it with great sensitivity, not least in an expressive trick – favoured by Christian Gerhaher – of being able to withhold and gently apply vibrato at will. Occasionally one fears for the voice's general robustness, and he starts to sound a little tired in 'An den Tod', but at its best it's a wonderfully expressive and seductive instrument.

What distinguishes this recital, however, is the interpretations themselves, bringing

freshness to familiar numbers and making a persuasive case for those that are heard less often. We start with a touchingly tender and chaste account of 'Der Bach im Frühling', after which Johnson's accompaniment to 'Der Wanderer an den Mond' is a marvel of peacock-like prancing. The pianist gives a delicious bounce to 'Fischerweise' and has an unexpected, almost spiky way with the introduction to 'Gruppe aus dem Tartarus'. Throughout there's a pleasing sense of contrast between the Johnson's sharply drawn contributions and Appl's serene vocalism and gentle musicality (listen to the way he colours the phrase 'Schwester Seele' in 'Verklärung', around 1'20", for an example). Other highlights include a genuinely unnerving 'Der Zwerg' at the centre of the programme (one of few numbers followed by applause), and a delightful 'Die Taubenpost' to close – a disarming conclusion to an outstanding recital, and a beautifully recorded one too.

Hugo Shirley

Stradella

Santa Editta

Veronica Cangemi, **Francesca Aspromonte**,

Claudia Di Carlo *sops* **Gabriella Martellacci** *contr*

Fernando Guimarães *ten* **Sergio Foresti** *bass*

Ensemble Mare Nostrum / **Andrea De Carlo**

Arcana © A396 (56' • DDD • T/t)



Carlo Gesualdo might get all the attention when it comes to colourful composer

biographies but Alessandro Stradella (1639-82) gives the murderer-composer more than a run for his money. A fraudster, playboy and serial seducer (wimples no object), Stradella was the subject of at least one failed murder plot and was eventually stabbed to death by an unknown killer. If his music can't quite live up to the thrills of his life, it's still got plenty to recommend it, as this latest recording from Ensemble Mare Nostrum demonstrates.

Launched in 2014, the ensemble's Stradella Project aims to bring the composer's works to a new audience at the rate of one new recording project per year. We've already had the lively serenata *La forza delle stelle* (12/14) and the premiere recording of the oratorio *San Giovanni Crisostomo* (11/15), and now Andrea De Carlo and his musicians present *Santa Editta* – an oratorio inspired by the little-known English Saint Edith of Wilton.

If the subject matter seems obscure, it provides the composer with the perfect



Ensemble Mare Nostrum recording Stradella in Nepi's Cathedral of the Assunta

framework for an oratorio that dramatises the struggle between worldly pleasures and power (rendered in sprightly dances and some beautiful ensembles) and the rewards of the spiritual life. Editta herself (Veronica Cangemi) is beset on all sides by allegorical figures – Nobilità (Francesca Aspromonte), Humiltà (Claudia Di Carlo), Grandezza (Gabriella Martellacci), Bellezza (Fernando Guimarães) and Senso (Sergio Foresti) – who each take it in turns to plead their case.

The usually excellent Cangemi isn't on finest vocal form here, tending to the shrill, with some definite tightness at the top of the voice, but dramatically it's a vivid performance – a foil for the diverse cast of musical characters around her. The standout is Aspromonte. This young soprano (so dynamic as Music/Messenger in *Orfeo* at the 2015 BBC Proms) is all sparkling ease and delight, blending beautifully with Cangemi in their 'Bella luce' duet. Foresti's Senso is agile, Guimarães brightly forward and resonant. The score, if lacking any cut-out-and-keep moments, has an easy flow to it – an attractive hour of music that should win some new fans for the Stradella Project.

Alexandra Coghlan

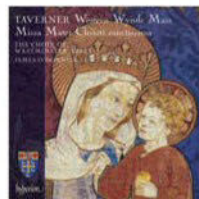
Taverner

Masses – *Mater Christi sanctissima*; *Western Wynde*. *Mater Christi sanctissima*

The Choir of Westminster Abbey /

James O'Donnell

Hyperion © CDA68147 (59' • DDD • T/t)



Hot on the heels of Andrew Parrott's fine account of Taverner's *Western Wynde Mass*

(Avie, 5/16) comes this double-bill from Westminster Abbey, pairing the work with the composer's Mass-and-motet cycle *Mater Christi*. This is an astute piece of programming, for the two works are equally compact, however different they may be in other respects. By the standard of similar Mass-and-motet cycles by Ludford or Fayrfax, *Mater Christi* is indeed unusually compact, though its melodic style is of a piece with Taverner at his most expansive, post-Eton idiom; yet it still comes across as more expansive than *Western Wynde* and its extremely corseted structure.

These are very sound, lucid performances in every sense. The recorded balance allows the individual lines of *Mater Christi* to be heard with surprising clarity given the acoustic – not the Abbey's, incidentally, but that of St Alban's, Holborn. There's not a weak link in the distribution (the 'In nomine' of *Mater Christi* shows off the adult

males to particularly good effect); and although initial treble entries can sometimes appear hesitant, on the whole these boys deal with the long drawn-out phrases with as much confidence as their elders. In comparison with the Taverner Consort, James O'Donnell's reading of *Western Wynde* is rather softer-centred, but that's neither particularly surprising nor a bad thing in itself: a work as resourcefully inventive as this both sustains and deserves such contrasting approaches. Taverner accommodates a certain brashness but this more gentle rendering grows on me.

Fabrice Fitch

Veneziano

'Passio'

La Passione secondo Giovanni

Raffaale Pe counterten Evangelist **Luca Cervoni** ten

Christus **Marco Bussi** bass Pilatus **Ghislieri Choir**;

Cappella Neapolitana / Antonio Florio

Glossa © GCD922609 (56' • DDD • T/t)



Favourite pupil of Francesco Provenzale and the most prominent Neapolitan

composer before the arrival of Scarlatti, Gaetano Veneziano lived and worked in

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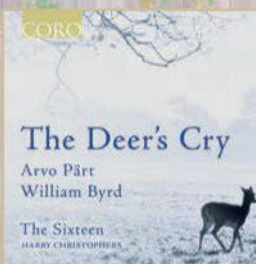


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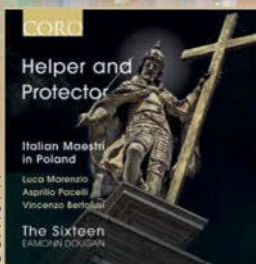
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the city for most of his life. His music is now little performed, so it is a true ear-opener to be presented with his *Passio del Venerdì Santo*, composed about 1685, which sets the version of the story as recounted in the Gospel of St John. In purely structural terms the parallels with Scarlatti's *Passione secondo Giovanni* of about the same date are close, but after that the similarities end.

The most striking stylistic feature of Veneziano's work is its remarkable modernity, which combines old and new in a manner that was to prove highly influential for Neapolitan composers of the next generation. For this ambitious recording the indefatigable Antonio Florio has worked up a sensitive realisation, which surely deserves to be published, from the single surviving source. Here the players of his Cappella Neapolitana (in essence a rechristening of the legendary group I Turchini which Florio founded years ago) give it a convincing and extrovert reading, with plenty of adroit and appropriate colourful touches and attention to detail; in many ways these instrumental performers are the heroes of the hour.

The interventions of the unusually densely packed chorus are few and far between; the weight of the almost conversational narrative mostly falls on the three principal characters. Marco Bussi provides a firm and authoritative Pilate, while Luca Cervoni turns in a carefully nuanced Christ, rising splendidly to the occasion with a powerful account of Christ's final agony. Accolades should also be handed out to Raffaele Pe, whose engaged and highly rhetorical approach to the role of the Evangelist is extremely effective. The final verdict must be that this is a moving and persuasive performance of a genuine masterpiece brought back to life.

Iain Fenlon

'Decades'

'A Century of Song, Vol 1 - 1810-1820'

Beethoven Drei Gesänge, Op 83. Abendlied unterm gestirnten Himmel, WoO150
Fabry-Garat Plainte à Hortence **Gail** Bolleros
Schubert An den Mond, D193. An den Mond, D259. Der Blumenbrief, D622. Erster Verlust, D226. Der Fischer, D225. Freude der Kinderjahre, D455. Ganymed, D554. Das Grab, D569. Das Heimweh, D456. Rastlose Liebe, D138. Seligkeit, D433. Die Sommernacht, D289. Täglich zu singen, D533. Wandrers Nachtlied I, D224. Wer kauft Liebesgötter?, D261. Wiegenlied, D304 **Sor** De amor an las prisiones. Mis descuidados ojos. Las mujeres y cuerdas **Tomášek** An die Entfernte. Nähe des Geliebten. Rastlose Liebe. Schäfers Klage **Viotti** Prives l'amour, WVII:4. Stanco di pascolar, WVII:10 **Weber** Abschied vom Leben, Op 41, Heft 1, No 2

Lorna Anderson, Sylvia Schwartz *sops*
Ann Murray *mez* **Michael Schade** *ten*
Florian Boesch *bar* **Malcolm Martineau** *pf*
 Vivat © VIVAT112 (79' • DDD • T/T)



As Susan Youens puts it – with some understatement – in her superb booklet-note, 'The decade from 1810 to 1820 was a momentous one for song.' These were the years when the piano-accompanied Lied came of age, thanks to Beethoven and to the young Schubert, who in the years 1815 and 1816 alone penned over 250 songs, few of them negligible, many among the world's best-loved. Beethoven and Schubert, familiar and unfamiliar, naturally take pride of place in this opening salvo in Malcolm Martineau's enterprising survey of European song, decade by decade. But he and his singers venture well off piste, to Spain and Bohemia, even taking in two obscure French composers, Joseph-Dominique Fabry-Garat and the singer-pianist Sophie Gail. If you can hum any of their tunes, I'm impressed.

To Michael Schade falls the bulk of the songs here. His lyric tenor retains much of its sweetness, though his tone can harden at *forte*, as in Schubert's 'Rastlose Liebe' or the climax of 'Ganymed', here more strenuous than rapturous. But Schade is always an involved, communicative singer, eagerly responsive to mood and verbal detail, and excelling in tenderness and intimacy, whether in the rippling innocence of 'Der Blumenbrief' or the Schubertised *bel canto* of 'An den Mond'. In the Beethoven group he is delicate and *innig* in 'Wonne der Wehmut'; he vividly catches the surge of delight in the final, major-key verse of 'Sehnsucht'; and brings a mingled awe and dramatic intensity to the cosmic grandeur of 'Abendlied unterm gestirnten Himmel'. Schade is persuasive, too, in four attractive songs by Václav Jan Tomášek, even if the Bohemian's 'Rastlose Liebe' sounds rather ineffectual, and awkwardly written, alongside Schubert's.

The diamond-bright Spanish-English soprano Sylvia Schwartz also makes her mark, finely sustaining the high tessitura of the rapt 'Wiegenlied' (least-known of Schubert's three songs of this name), and finding a more sultry tone for three playfully erotic seguidillas by Fernando Sor. Lorna Anderson sings the melodious trifles by Fabry-Garat and Gail (a piquant bolero) with grace and spirit, and there are welcome cameos from Ann Murray (in two pastoral ditties by Viotti) and Florian

Boesch, hushed and intense in Schubert's 'Das Grab'. Malcolm Martineau's luminous touch and rhythmic point are priceless assets throughout. In short, an absorbing and entertaining chapter in the history of song, delightfully capped by Sylvia Schwartz-as-Papagena in Schubert's jaunty 'Wer kauft Liebesgötter?'

Richard Wigmore

'English Romantic Madrigals'

Elgar To her beneath whose steadfast star
Goodhart Lady on the silver throne **Leslie** My love is fair. Thine eyes so bright **Parry** La belle dame sans merci. Who can dwell with greatness!
Pearsall Great God of love. Lay a garland. Light of my soul. Sing we and chaunt it. Summer is y' coming in **Stainer** The castle by the sea. Disappointment. Dry your sweet cheek. Flora's Queen. Like as a ship **Stanford** God and the universe. On Time

The Choir of Royal Holloway / Rupert Gough
 Hyperion © CDA68140 (78' • DDD • T)



It's a mystery how often repertoire being recorded diverges from what is

performed in concert halls. Sometimes there are obvious reasons of expense or practicality, but often there's little obvious explanation for this disjunction. Take madrigals for example. When was the last time you heard an entire programme of the part-song's contrapuntal cousin, either in its original Renaissance form or its 19th-century revival? Yet still they persist on disc.

You can't fault Rupert Gough and the Choir of Royal Holloway for the bravery of an album that leads with such unfashionable names as Stainer, Pearsall, Parry and Stanford, nor for the interest of their repertoire, which includes no fewer than six premiere recordings (music by Henry Leslie and Stainer). But it's hard to listen to this over-perfumed musical kitsch and not think of Gilbert & Sullivan's 'merry madrigal'.

Gough pitches the performances exactly right though, allowing the music to speak for itself without undue intervention. Press too hard on these delicate miniatures and they smudge into outright vulgarity, something Gough and his young singers avoid with some impeccably judged interpretations, executed with equal skill. Such is the power of their advocacy that it's almost possible to forget just how far even Elgar's *To her beneath whose steadfast star* or Pearsall's lovely *Lay a garland* diverge from the brilliance of

any of the movements from Parry's *Songs of Farewell*. Almost.

While Stainer's previously unrecorded madrigals are disappointingly bland, more interest is to be had from both Stanford's *God and the universe* and *On Time*, and Arthur Murray Goodheart's *Lady on the silver throne* is an unexpectedly agile affair, harmonically. All the Pearsall contributions though sound like poor cousins of *Lay a garland*, with the exception of his elegant six-part *Summer is y' coming in* arrangement, beautifully rendered here by solo voices.

Alexandra Coghlan

'Her Heavenly Harmony'

'Profane Music from the Royal Court'

Byrd And think ye nymphs. Compel the hawk. The eagle's force. Ye sacred Muses **Gibbons** Ah, dear heart. Dainty fine bird. Fair is the rose. The silver swan **Morley** Arise, awake. Hard by a crystal fountain. No, no, *Nigella*. Now is the gentle season **Tallis** Like as the doleful dove. O ye tender babes. When shall my sorrowful sighing slake **Tomkins** Cloris when as I woo. Music divine. O let me live for true love - O let me die for true love. See, see the shepherds' queen. The fauns and satyrs stripping **Weelkes** Death hath deprived me. Like two proud armies. Mars in a fury. Thule, the Period of Cosmography - The Andalusian merchant **The Queen's Six**

Resonus © RES10164 (62' • DDD • T)



It is old news to mention the fact that their polished blend and ensemble come

from the fact that the members of The Queen's Six sing together every day (in their day jobs as lay clerks at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle). It is, though, as important as ever with this new collection of secular music for the court of Elizabeth I to emphasise the additional element of collusion one senses when listening to the evident enjoyment they derive from singing together. It brings a kind of twinkle to the performance that it is hard to find in the proliferation of groups of this type that would fare more honestly under the title 'rent-a-choir' than 'ensemble', such is the speed of change among their personnel.

The barely contained excitement behind the singing on this disc does not, however, undermine its refinement. Thomas Morley's madrigal *Hard by a crystal fountain* is a particular example of how the group's phrasing, melodic sense and harmonic direction all indicate not only how much this music is in the blood of

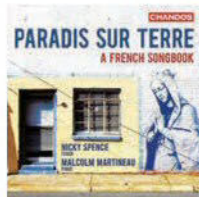
these singers, but also the amount of serious work that goes into their reading of a repertoire that is still – after so many years – often treated as unworthy of serious interpretative study. The performance of each piece leaves behind it the strong image of a perfect vignette – a musical miniature entirely freestanding and meticulously crafted. One small criticism to that end, though, is that one or two of the pieces are rather weaker than their companions here – Thomas Weelkes's *Like two proud armies* and Morley's *No, no Nigella*, for example. Not only would their lack have gone happily unnoticed but it would also have left the remaining glittering examples to shine even more brightly in the light in which The Queen's Six illuminate them.

Caroline Gill

'Paradis sur terre'

'A French Songbook'

L Boulanger Clairières dans le ciel
Caplet Les prières **Chaminade** Mélodies
Debussy Trois Mélodies de Verlaine
Nicky Spence ten **Malcolm Martineau** pf
Chandos © CHAN10893 (65' • DDD • T/t)



The sacred and the worldly rub shoulders in Nicky Spence and Malcolm Martineau's

'Paradis sur terre', which opens with war-wounded André Caplet's deeply personal 1917 settings, in French rather than ecclesiastical Latin, of the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and Apostle's Creed, and closes with a strikingly urbane group of 1890s songs by Cécile Chaminade, which combine a *carpe diem* stance with a riot of natural imagery. In between come Debussy's 1891 Verlaine settings, and Lili Boulanger's 1914 song-cycle *Clairières dans le ciel* to a recherché text by Francis Jammes that elides religious symbolism with more natural imagery in its portrait of a doomed, possibly unconsummated affair. It's a big, eclectic work, influenced by Debussy and Fauré, though Boulanger also underscores the atmosphere of post-Romantic morbidity by liberally ringing changes on the Act 3 prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* at the mid-point and again at the close.

It's a repertory that suits Spence rather well. Caplet and Boulanger allow us to hear some finely shaded soft singing and a striking *mezza voce* that extends upwards with ease, resulting in some remarkable hovering phrases in his upper registers. The Verlaine settings are more assertive – the expansive warmth of the opening 'La

mer est plus belle' is particularly engaging – while Chaminade's songs, which sometimes veer towards Massenet in mock-18th-century mode, are admirable in their lightness of touch, with some graceful coloratura and a pleasing ring in Spence's high notes. Martineau, as one might expect, is stylish and elegant throughout: he's at his most eloquent in *Les prières*, the modal harmonies of which owe much to Debussy's *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* (which Caplet partly orchestrated), and wonderfully persuasive in the Boulanger cycle, where the complex piano-writing continuously hints at emotions lurking vaguely formed and half-hidden beneath vocal line and text. **Tim Ashley**

'Rêves d'Espagne'

Albéniz Iberia - El puerto **Dørumsgaard**
Spanish Traditional Songs^a **Granados** Oriental,
Op 37 No 2 **Ibert** Chansons de Don Quichotte^a
Ravel Don Quichotte à Dulcinée^a **Shostakovich**
Six Spanish Songs, Op 100^a
^a**Henk Neven** bar **Hans Eijsackers** pf
Onyx © ONYX4132 (55' • DDD • T/t)



'I hope this CD allows you to dream for a while and escape your everyday reality,' Henk

Neven writes in a booklet-note for his new album, a beautiful survey of the impact of Spain on 20th-century song composers from elsewhere, for whom, Neven argues, the country represented a flight into an idealised world of reverie. The disc itself, however, tells a different story, for the fascination with Spain as exotic, even alien, frequently forms the starting point for dark confrontations with emotional reality.

Ibert's and Ravel's Don Quixote cycles, with their fragile, illusory beauty, flank the melancholy irony of Shostakovich's 1956 *Spanish Songs* and six numbers from Arne Dørumsgaard's immense collection of *Forgotten Songs* that nostalgically reconstruct the formality and eroticism of the Spanish Renaissance. Pianist Hans Eijsackers contributes solo pieces by Albéniz and Granados – they partly serve to remind us just how idiomatic Ibert's and Ravel's evocations of Spain could be – though neither deflects from the dominant tone, which is one of great sadness.

Neven's lightish, sensual baritone speaks volumes in both Ibert's *Chansons* and *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée*, where he sounds more the glamorous young knight of Quixote's imaginings than the ageing dreamer himself. In the Ibert, in particular, he brings into play an extraordinary range of



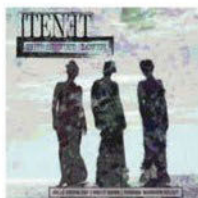
Baritone Henk Neven and pianist Hans Eijsackers explore musical evocations of Spain on their new Onyx recital

colour and dynamics, beautifully deployed and controlled, nowhere more so than in the eerie, wordless monotone that signals the end of both illusion and life at the close. The Shostakovich is a bit too genteel for my taste, though Dørumsgaard's long, subtly inflected lines have wonderful nobility and gravitas.

The accompaniments here, though, seem heavyweight when placed beside, say, Dallapiccola's early music arrangements for voice and piano, a flaw which Eijsackers can't quite disguise. But elsewhere he's superbly graceful and subtle. His solos, admirable in their strength and delicacy, are first-rate, too. **Tim Ashley**

'The Secret Lover'

Anonymous Passacalli della vita **Caccini**
Dispiegate guancie amate. Nube gentil
Frescobaldi Toccata d'India Piangono al pianger mio
Kapsberger Capona. Kapsberger **Mazzocchi**
Fortuna sul volto **Ortiz** Ricercar **L. Rossi** Fan
battaglia i miei pensieri **M. Rossi** Toccata **Shaw**
Dolce cantavi **Strozzi** L'amante segreto. Amor
dormiglione. Amor non si fugge. L'Eraclito
amoroso, 'Udite amanti'. Le tre Grazie a Venere
Tenet with **Josh Lee** *va da gamba*
Jeffrey Grossman *hpd* **Hank Heijink**, **Daniel**
Swenberg, **Charles Weaver** *theo/lute/gtr*
Avie © AV2326 (65' • DDD • T/t)



Founded in 1580 by the Duke of Ferrara, the Concerto delle Donne was an institution that revolutionised women's role in music-making. For the first time an all-female ensemble had a professional position in secular society and an outlet for their virtuoso talents. On 'The Secret Lover', American early music ensemble Tenet pay homage to their musical ancestresses in a programme of music by Strozzi, Kapsberger, Caccini and Rossi.

Tenet's artistic director, soprano Jolle Greenleaf, is joined here by soprano Molly Quinn, mezzo Virginia Warnken and a variety of instrumentalists for a programme that has all the intimacy and seductive charm of the drawing room. These aren't big voices: the interest is all in the nuance of tone and the subtlety of the vocal rhetoric of the often impassioned texts. Francesca Caccini's 'Dispiegate guancie amate' prompts a delicious variety of voice-distorting effects, and Strozzi's 'L'amante segreto' – the most extended work on the album – is an episodic

drama-in-miniature that's beautifully varied and handled. But too often you want just a bit more tone colour, a bit more Italianate abandon from these very correct early music performers.

The voices are at their best in three-part writing, whether in the playful exchanges of Luigi Rossi's pulsing 'Fan battaglia', Strozzi's more lyrical 'Le tre Grazie a Venere' or the overt sensuality of the anonymous 'Passacalli della vita', in which the three voices glide among one another, occasionally meeting for a deliciously prolonged and suggestive suspension.

The instrumental numbers are wonderful throughout, from the simplicity of Kapsberger's self-titled little song or his brief 'Caponi' to the outlandish chromaticisms of Michelangelo Rossi's Toccata for harpsichord, performed with dexterity by Jeffrey Grossman. Taken as a whole, 'The Secret Lover' is a nicely judged recital programme, offering more than enough textural variety to compensate for the slightly contained performances.

Alexandra Coghlan

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REISSUES

Bryce Morrison celebrates the talent of André Watts and **Rob Cowan** explores the Bamberg SO's first 70 years

André Watts, the 'giant'

'You see, I adore talent.' This simple declaration by Alice Pogorelich, during our time together as jury members of the Ivo Pogorelich Competition, returned to me as I listened to Sony Classical's 12-CD tribute to **André Watts** (retailing at about £30). And as I listened, dazzled and bemused, I also recalled Horowitz's dictum 'without temperament, nothing'. Watts had talent and temperament in spades, his charisma only equalled in America by the tragically short-lived William Kapell. Launched by Bernstein, to replace the ever-ailing Glenn Gould, the 16-year-old Watts rocketed to an all-American superstardom, later playing up to 150 concerts a year. Such early exposure and acclaim has its dangers, as many have found to their cost; and if Watts is unquestionably a 'giant' (Bernstein), there are times in Sony's sumptuous set that you wish he would downsize his immense gifts in the interests of a finer, more perceptive musicianship. This is notably true of the Liszt Sonata, where his depth-charge virtuosity (try the octaves before the valedictory coda) makes you more conscious of an engulfing brilliance than of Liszt's musical landmark. Watts may have confessed that he often spoke to the piano before a concert, hoping for 'love and friendship between us', but his blistering assault on the six *Paganini* Etudes (try the trill at the climax of 'La campanella') must have sent his instrument running for cover.

There are hints, too, in the Tchaikovsky First Concerto of a glib, quick-fix alternative to genuine musical quality, a surprisingly heavy-handed way with the *Andantino's* central *Prestissimo* (that 'scherzo of fireflies') – and Bernstein's fulsome sense of Tchaikovsky's rhetoric could cause more than a raised eyebrow in

Moscow circles. But drawing a line under what may well seem a churlish and mealy-mouthed commentary, I have to say that virtually everything else induces wonder and amazement.

Hear Watts's first entry in the *Andante* of Brahms's Second Concerto, that slow upward spiral where, as he put it, 'you have to take a deep breath and hold it until you reach the top; you have to be a singer rather than a pianist'. His Rachmaninov Third may suffer from once-acceptable cuts but the performance (with its combination of both cadenzas and flash-of-the-octave *ossia* elaboration at the end) will set all pulses racing as it hurtles to its triumphant close. Muscles bulge and ripple in Liszt's *Totentanz*, which can scarcely have been given with a more malignant sense of glee, while on the solo front there is one marvel after another. What romantic yet authentic intensity in the first of the two Scarlatti sonatas; what skyrocketing bravura in the second (both taken live from Watts's 1980 Tokyo recital). His Brahms, taken from Op 119, tells you that he possessed that most cardinal of musical virtues – a communicative ardour reaching to the back of the hall and, indeed, far beyond. His Debussy's *Children's Corner* is deeply personal with its sense of a lost world of innocence, fantasy and freedom (there are touches of anger in both 'The Snow is Dancing' and 'The Little Shepherd'), even when all is resolved in a 'Golliwog's Cakewalk', which is amiable to the point of caricature.

Such glory makes you forget a less than happy Schubert *Wanderer* Fantasy which, while stunning at one level, does not ring true at another. There is forcing of the issue, too, in the bleak A minor Sonata, D784, yet he can dance the *Schubplattler* in his selection of Ländler, waltzes and éccosaisses with the best of them.



Temperament and charisma: André Watts

The pressure is on again in Beethoven. In the Op 10 No 3 Sonata's finale an electric current races from pylon to pylon, and the final bars of the 32 C minor Variations are ablaze with a technical aplomb known to few pianists. But then again, what naturalness and simplicity in *Für Elise*, a memorable alternative to the meal made of it by Pogorelich in a London recital. Then there is Chopin. Watts may roar and rant his way through the opening movement of the Op 35 Sonata but his F minor *Fantaisie* is among the most powerful and eloquent on record.

Then there is Watts's Gershwin. Has anyone given *Rhapsody in Blue* (solo version) or the song transcriptions with a more wicked seduction, a flawless evocation of New York's urban poet of the jazz age? Again, as elsewhere, you are overwhelmingly aware of a pianist whose personality leaps across the footlights, never cabined, cribbed or confined by studio restriction. Watts can make even his finest colleagues sound staid and conformist in comparison. Charismatic and dazzlingly photogenic, Watts was born for standing ovations and the creation of a bittersweet envy among lesser mortals. Lavishly presented, superbly remastered and with a warm-hearted appreciation by Jed Distler, this is a must for all lovers of pianistic genius. **Bryce Morrison**

THE RECORDING

André Watts: The Complete Columbia Album Collection

Sony Classical © 1988/75 11979-2



The Bamberg SO in the Joseph-Keilberth-Saal, its home since 1993: the orchestra sprang to life 70 years ago, comprising musicians from the German Philharmonic of Prague

Showcasing a fine orchestra – 70 years on

Complex memories hover over the founding of the **Bamberg Symphony Orchestra**, which sprang to life 70 years ago and was made up in the main of musicians who had previously been members of the German Philharmonic of Prague. Josef Keilberth was Principal Conductor of the latter and that, chronologically, is where this musically varied set (selling for about £40) starts, in October 1940 with an uncommonly urgent first-release GPP account of Mozart's *Prague* Symphony. A wide-eyed Schumann *Spring* Symphony hails from four years later and thereafter we're clear of the warzone and safely in post-war Bamberg, where Keilberth again took the reins.

To be quite truthful, Keilberth in Bamberg (including Pfitzner, Smetana *Má vlast* excerpts, Beethoven No 1 and Mozart No 40) amounts to no more than elevated routine whereas Fritz Lehmann's Dvořák No 8 from 1953 is among the most thrilling from this or any other period, my only gripe concerning a lack of tenderness in the lengthy wind-down to the finale's coda.

Ferdinand Leitner upholds high standards for an exceptional 1951 reading of Mozart's glorious *Haffner* Serenade, again about as good as it gets (Dénes Zsigmondy is the superb solo violinist), especially the *Andante* sixth movement, which contains some of the most seductively romantic music in the whole of Mozart's output, beautifully handled by the Bambergers. Tempi are perfectly judged and the sum effect resembles chamber music on a grand scale. Leitner also leads a persuasively perceptive Mozart K491 Piano Concerto with Wilhelm Kempff, and the fourth disc is a mixed popular concert under Clemens Krauss, Otmar Suitner, Keilberth and most exceptionally Lehmann, whose account of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* thrills to the core in the duel music. What a pity that the

original LP couplings of Dvořák's *Slavonic Rhapsodies* (as tantalisingly illustrated on the reproduced LP cover) weren't chosen instead of, say, pleasant but ultimately forgettable performances of *Peer Gynt* music and Johann Strauss. It would also have been desirable to have had a sampling of Lehmann's excellent complete Bamberg set of Handel's Op 6 Concerti grossi.

A disc of eight overtures includes a couple of interesting first releases: a fine if rather cloudily recorded *A Midsummer Night's Dream* under Witold Rowicki and Clemens Krauss conducting *Oberon*. A memorable, vocally impressive German-language disc of highlights from Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* featuring Pilar Lorengar, Fritz Wunderlich and Gottlob Frick was well worth resurrecting and an abundantly imaginative first-release Mahler Fourth under István Kertész (with Edith Gabry) comes coupled with Jascha Horenstein's sympathetically conducted *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the expressively potent baritone Norman Foster as soloist.

Kurt Sanderling's 1998 Beethoven *Pastoral* Symphony, another first release, witnesses a veritable sunburst for the 'Shepherd's Song', and there are six vigorously turned Dvořák *Slavonic Dances* from Antal Dorati's complete 1974 Vox set, taken from Opp 46 and 72. Eugen Jochum's wonderfully supple 1984 *Till Eulenspiegel* is nearly – though not quite – matched by his vigorous *Don Juan*, though the Mozart *Jupiter* Symphony and *Masonic Funeral Music* on the same CD recall the warmly emotive Mozart style of Bruno Walter.

A first-release 1995 Richard Strauss *Metamorphosen* under Giuseppe Sinopoli generates maximum intensity, building impressively as it unfolds, and Horst Stein's 1988 *Alpine Symphony* is mobile, luminous, impassioned and capped by a mighty thunderclap in the storm. Rarely have I encountered an *Alpine* that is quite

so musically satisfying. Stein also keeps a firm hand on the tiller for Bruckner No 4, Schubert No 8 and Brahms No 1 (the latter slow but incisive), while a first-release Bruckner Ninth under Günter Wand (1995) is characteristic if just a little restless. Christoph Eschenbach's Schumann No 4 (1990) is rich in varied perspectives, and Herbert Blomstedt offers an agile, warmly expressed Brahms Fourth (1995), again previously unissued. From the Bamberg Symphony's current maestro Jonathan Nott we have an attentively observed Mahler First (from Nott's generally excellent Tudor Mahler cycle), a superb first-release Strauss *Four Last Songs* with a pure-voiced Genia Kühmeier as soloist and a detailed, well-ordered and stunningly well-recorded *Rite of Spring*.

Inevitably in a set such as this, the selection process won't please everyone. Why, for example, given that the set draws material from numerous CD labels, wasn't space found for at least a sampling from Stein's benchmark Reger series for Koch – the wonderful *Serenade*, say, or the Piano Concerto with Gerhard Oppitz, especially in this, Reger's death-centenary year? Then there are Glazunov and Martinů symphonies with Neeme Järvi (BIS), Hartmann symphonies with Ingo Metzmacher (Warner Classics), and so on. Granted, copyright complications may have barred the way; but, viewed overall, this is a well-planned, generous Bamberg sampler. The sound quality is mostly very good, certainly where digital technology takes the lead, and the documentation more than adequate. Not exactly a historic blockbuster, then, but a very good collection, adequately showcasing an extremely fine orchestra.

Rob Cowan

THE RECORDING

Bamberg Symphony: The First 70 Years

DG © 17 479 5805GB17

Opera



Mike Ashman listens to Pavarotti in a reissued live *Ballo in maschera*:
'Everywhere that unique catch in the voice suggests the frustration and desire essential to Gustavo's character' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 92**



Hugo Shirley reviews a new set of Wolf-Ferrari's *Gioielli*:
'A dizzying juxtaposition of all sorts of modernistic influences against a raucous evocation of street life' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**

Cavalli

'Sospiri d'amore'

Ciro – Corone ed honori. **Egisto** – Hor che l'Aurora.

Elena – Io chiudo nel core. **Eritrea** – O luci belle.

Muzio Scevola – L'aspetto feroce. **Orimonte** – Qui

cadè al tuo piè. **Ormindo** – D'Amor non si quereli;

Sì, sì, che questa notte. **Pompeo Magna** – Alpi

gelate. **Scipione Africano** – Io misero fui Rege.

Statira – Lassa, che fò; Vanne intrepido o mio

bene. **Veremonda** – Né meste più

Giulia Semenzato *sop* **Raffaele Pe** *counterten*

La Venexiana / **Claudio Cavina**

Glossa © GCD920940 (60' • DDD • T/T)



At his death, Monteverdi left us a small, precious handful of operas.

Even allowing for those lost, his output in this genre was a small one but occupies a disproportionately large place in the recording catalogue generally, and La Venexiana's in particular. Cavalli, by contrast, was the prolific composer of some 40 operas, of which around 30 still survive. The ensemble's latest disc pays homage to this large and varied repertoire with duets and arias exploring love in all its many shapes and colours.

Claudio Cavina and his ensemble are joined by two exceptional young soloists, soprano Giulia Semenzato and countertenor Raffaele Pe, who lead their listeners through the emotional highs and lows of some of the composer's lesser-known operas. *Ormindo* aside, this collection prefers to stick to the operatic B roads of *Statira*, *Veremonda* and *Pompeo Magno*, setting it apart from the 2005 recording (good in parts) by Sergio Vartolo and Mediterraneo Concerto (Naxos, 6/05) and last year's outstanding 'Heroines of the Venetian Baroque' by Capella Mediterranea (Riccar, 11/15), both dominated by music from *Calisto*, *Didone*, *Giasone* and *Eliogabolo*.

'Sospiri d'amore' – a recital of carefully chosen excerpts, many of which send you off in search of the complete opera – has a

beautiful ebb and flow to it, moving from the playful ('Qui cade al tuo piè') to the desperate ('Io misero fui Rege') in thoughtful juxtapositions and musical arcs. It helps that Semenzato and Pe take an expansive, Italianate approach to this highly rhetorical music, aided by delicate interventions from Cavina's small, infinitely refined band.

This is public opera rendered with private immediacy and intensity, and although some might miss the brass flurries and fanfares of other recordings, there's such dramatic flexibility in these arias, ariosos and duets that it's easier to accept a narrower textural canvas.

Alexandra Coghlan

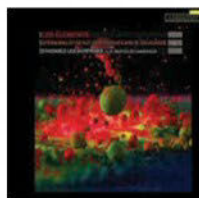
Delalande/Destouches

Les éléments

Ensemble Les Surprises /

Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas

Ambronay © AMY046 (75' • DDD • T/T)



Les Surprises was co-founded by Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas in 2010.

In what has become a French tradition, the group is named after a stage work: in this case, Rameau's *Les surprises de l'amour*. The surprise here is that Bestion de Camboulas has taken a full-blown *opéra-ballet* and arranged excerpts for a chamber ensemble, with two sopranos and a baritone taking the various principal roles and doing duty for the chorus.

It works very well, though the result, not surprisingly, is more like a cantata than an opera. *Les éléments* was a collaboration between Delalande (1657-1726) and his pupil and colleague Destouches (1672-1749). First staged at the Tuileries in 1721, it was performed at the Opéra in 1725 and revived many times. It's not clear how the labour was divided, but most of the work was probably done by Destouches. In the Prologue, Destiny sends Chaos packing

and summons the elements, while reassuring Venus that Cupid's supremacy is unassailable. Of the four entrées that follow, air and earth don't get much of a look-in. What remains of the plot in 'Water' is obscure but it seems that Leucosie is able to marry Arion through the intervention of Neptune; in 'Fire', Cupid descends to save the vestal virgin Emilie from death, allowing her to marry her Valère.

The scoring, as presented, is delightful: single strings, oboe, bassoon, pairs of flutes and recorders, percussion and continuo. All get a chance to shine, especially the virtuoso flute and bassoon in the 'Air pour les Divinités', and the oboe duetting with the soprano in the Prologue. The music itself is always engaging: I was particularly taken with 'Brillez dans ces beaux lieux', a recitative for soprano and flute analogous to the opening of Handel's *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne*. And there's a beautiful sleep scene in 'Earth', quite unlike a Lully *sommeil*, the sonorous texture underpinned by a prominent double bass. It only remains to add that the baritone Etienne Bazola makes an admirable foil to the excellent sopranos Elodie Fonnard and Eugénie Lefebvre, and Bestion de Camboulas's direction from the harpsichord is spot-on.

Richard Lawrence

Gounod



Faust

Charles Castronovo *ten* Faust

Irina Lungu *sop* Marguerite

Ildar Abdrazakov *bass* Méphistophélès

Vasilij Ladjuk *bar* Valentin

Ketevan Kemoklidze *mez* Sièbel

Paolo Maria Orecchia *bar* Wagner

Samantha Korbey *mez* Marthe

Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Regio, Turin / Gianandrea Noseda

Stage director **Stefano Poda**

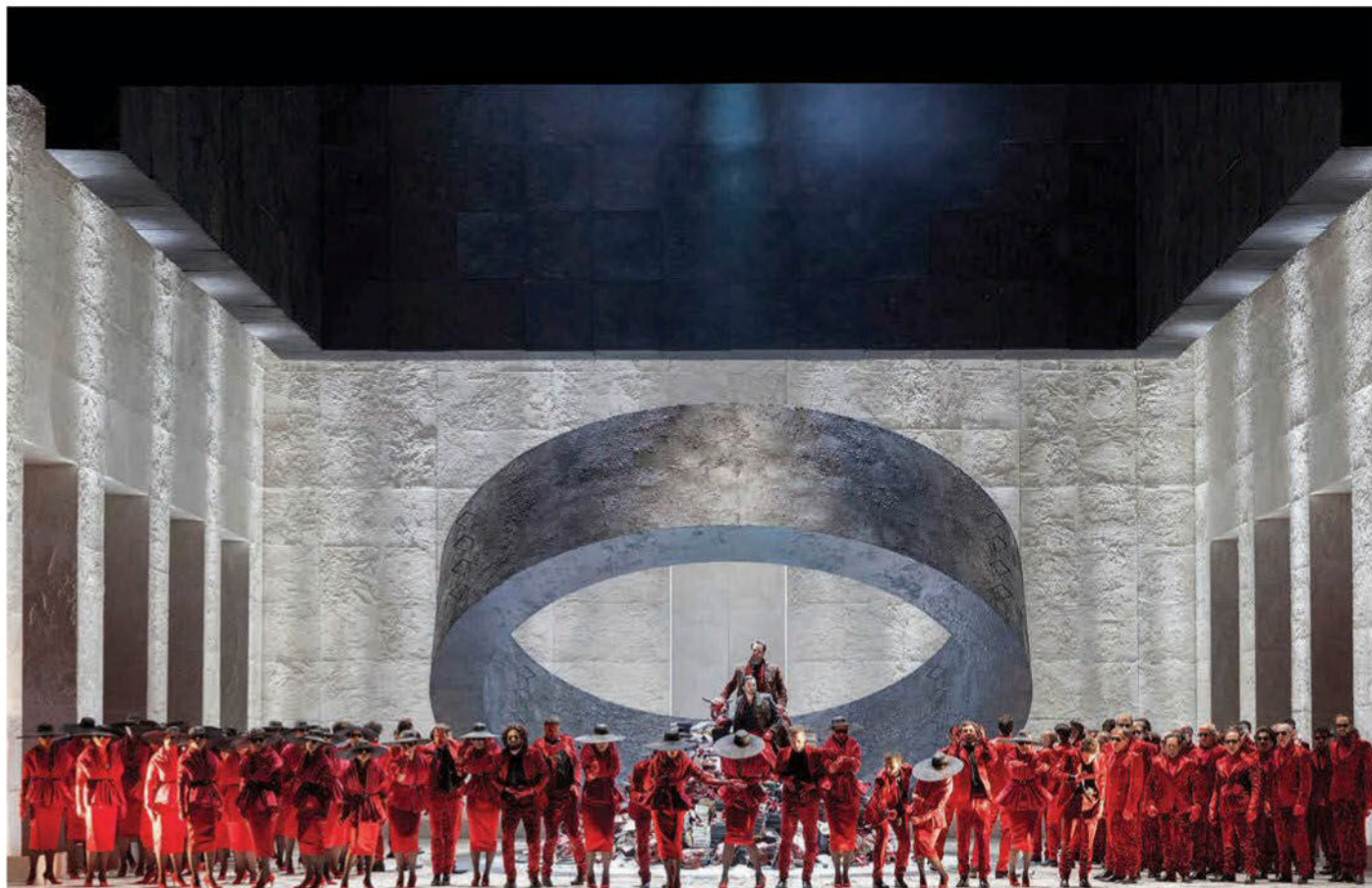
Video director **Tiziano Mancini**

C Major Entertainment © **DVD** 735108;

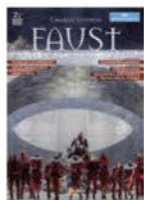
© **BD** 735204 (3h' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, June 7 & 9, 2015



Stefano Poda's production of Gounod's *Faust* from the Teatro Regio in Turin



One ring to rule them all: a giant metallic ring dominates the set of this new production of *Faust* from Turin. It tilts at different angles, rotates and pivots above another ring – a wreath of text on the stage floor taken from Goethe: 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'. Stefano Poda's production is heavy on symbolism, yet is stylish and enthralling. The opera opens with Charles Castronovo's aged, bare-chested Faust trapped within a circle of hourglasses beside a mountain of discarded books. Ildar Abdrazakov's Méphistophélès, sporting a pair of shades, suavely saunters in to offer him an escape and before long they're shaking hands on a deathly deal.

Blacks, whites and reds dominate the stage picture. Acres of scarlet velvet and satin costume the chorus in Act 2's carousing, the hard-driven waltz busy with crazy hand-choreography yet static in terms of actual dancing. The ring contains two ivory tree stumps in Marguerite's garden, where she dons a white coat encrusted in diamonds for her Jewel Song. Soldiers returning from the war are adorned with sacrificial crowns of

thorns, while Méphisto, during his Serenade, caresses a line-up of pregnant ladies, popping their balloon-inflated bellies with a pin. Soot-caked Nubians cavort and body-surf in Act 5's devilish Walpurgis night celebrations (much better choreographed than the waltz). Marguerite, caught in a web of ropes, dies in prison before earning salvation in a flood of bright light.

Gianandrea Noseda, the Teatro Regio's dynamic music director, leads a taut performance, drawing fine playing from his orchestra. The cast is mostly very good. There's a lovely burnished quality to Castronovo's Faust and he sings a fine 'Salut, demeure chaste et pure', despite a slightly ungainly ending. Abdrazakov's Méphisto is suave, with plenty of panache in 'Le veau d'or', but he can sometimes lack the saturnine blackness the darkest basses bring to the role. Russian soprano Irina Lungu is an affecting Marguerite; her pleasant lyric soprano negotiates the Jewel Song cleanly and her Act 3 duet with Castronovo is tenderly sung. Vasilij Ladjuk's stentorian baritone has pitch problems in Valentin's 'Avant de quitter ces lieux', but Samantha Korbey's Marthe – presented as a youthful vamp – and Ketevan Kemoklidze's sparky Siébel are bonuses.

In a production where night and darkness dominate, the picture quality is excellent, as is the sound. No extra features are included, but the production has much to recommend it. *Faust* can often seem a long opera in the theatre but the three hours just speed by here. **Mark Pullinger**

Leoncavallo

Zazà

Ermonela Jaho <i>sop</i>	Zazà
Stephen Gaertner <i>bar</i>	Cascart
Riccardo Massi <i>ten</i>	Milio Dufresne
Patricia Bardon <i>mez</i>	Anaïde
Kathryn Rudge <i>mez</i>	Natalia
David Stout <i>bar</i>	Bussy
Fflur Wyn <i>sop</i>	Floriana
Simon Thorpe <i>bar</i>	Duclou
Nicky Spence <i>ten</i>	Courtois
Christopher Turner <i>ten</i>	Augusto
Julia Ferri <i>spkr</i>	Totò Dufresne

BBC Singers and Symphony Orchestra /

Maurizio Benini

Opera Rara © ② ORC55 (136' • DDD • S/T/t)



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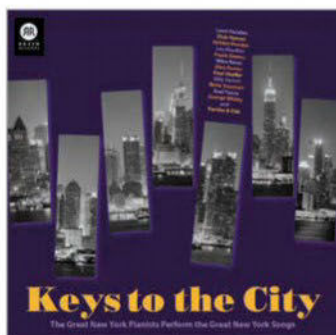
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Riccardo Massi, David Stout, Nicky Spence and Ermonela Jaho recording Leoncavallo's *Zazà* in the BBC's Maida Vale Studios

composer's revision of 1919) might feel a bit like mission creep for a company devoted to 'exploring the forgotten opera heritage of the 19th century'. I'm all for it, though, and this lavish new recording of *Zazà* is very welcome, exhibiting all the usual hallmarks of care and attention we've come to expect from the label. The work itself is fascinating, too, dating from the early part of Leoncavallo's difficult post-*Pagliacci* career. And it shares several concerns with the earlier opera, as well as some elements with Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* of 1902: *Zazà* is a performer (in Paris's Alcazar nightclub) betrayed in love, and there's a sense that, Canio-like, she's going to have to get on with the show after her own final words, 'Tutto è finito', with their unmistakable echo of those of *Pagliacci*.

One important difference is that no one gets stabbed – we're in civilised *fin de siècle* Paris – and this is all about small-scale personal tragedy. But not even Laura Protano-Biggs's excellent, in-depth booklet essay can feign much interest in the plot, describing it as 'in a sense negligible'. Indeed, in a way the opera feels like an experiment in trying to make us care about events that are essentially quite difficult to care about: *Zazà* has an affair with the philandering businessman Milio Dufresne;

she finds out he's married; they part ways. There are some interesting extra details along the way, not least the episode in which *Zazà* visits Milio's house to find out the truth, briefly meeting the wife before having a lengthy encounter with his young daughter – a spoken role.

But, for anyone brought up on standard narratives of eternal true love, there's inevitably something anticlimactic and unfulfilling about this mere dalliance, even if the opera gains modernist brownie points for portraying it. I worry, though, that the piece's ostensible modernity is undermined by its implication that the actress *Zazà* (and a gypsy to boot) has essentially strayed too far from the conventional path to find the redemption of a 'normal life' she seeks, even if we are clearly supposed to feel that her decision not to tell Milio's wife of the affair gives her redemption of a sort.

Nevertheless, Leoncavallo's music is charming, shifting seamlessly (and often) between the easy-going, wistful lyricism of the love scenes and lively depictions of the hustle and bustle of the theatrical milieu; but, as Protano-Biggs notes, the composer was his own worst enemy in pursuing an exclamatory style that meant that none of the title character's music was easily disseminated as discrete arias. It's an idiom,

however, that suits Ermonela Jaho extremely well, playing to the Albanian soprano's remarkable dramatic strengths. The voice itself – captured close-up in the recording from the BBC's Maida Vale Studios – has a slight lack of focus, but it conveys the character's emotions powerfully enough to avoid the mawkishness to which they might otherwise be prone.

As Milio, Riccardo Massi sings with wonderful old-school charm, the voice modest in size but lyrical, relaxed and plangent; listen to his carefree Act 1 ditty 'È un riso gentile' for an example of his seductiveness. Stephen Gaertner is eloquent and touching as Cascart, *Zazà*'s old friend, and makes the most of his Act 4 aria. Patricia Bardon offers a vividly over-the-top performance as Anaide, her jealous mother, partial to the bottle, and there are excellent supporting performances from Kathryn Rudge as her maid, Nicky Spence as the impresario Courtois, David Stout and Fflur Wyn. Maurizio Benini conducts with an easy feel for the score's shifting moods, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra play with real charm and affection. Fascinating, and recommended: it's difficult to imagine a better case ever being made for this delightful, touching piece on disc.

Hugo Shirley

Puccini

La rondine



Dinara Alieva *sop* Magda de Civry
Siobhan Stagg *sop* Yvette
Elbenita Kajtazi *sop* Bianca
Charles Castronovo *ten* Ruggero
Álvaro Zambrano *ten* Prunier
Alexandra Hutton *sop* Lisette
Stephanie Lauricella *mez* Suzy
Stephen Bronk *bass-bar* Rambaldo
Matthew Newlin *ten* Gobin
Noel Bouley *bar* Périchaud
Thomas Lehmann *bar* Crébillon
Carlton Ford *bar* Rabonnier

Chorus and Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper

Berlin / Roberto Rizzi Brignoli

Stage director **Rolando Villazón**

Video director **Ernestine Böttcher**

Delos  DV7010;  DV7011 (105' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S)
 Recorded live, March 14 & 18, 2015



La rondine is often dismissed (not least by me) as one of Puccini's weaker operas, a sort of poor hybrid between

La traviata and *La bohème*. Puccini's publisher, Ricordi, refused the score, dismissing it as 'bad Lehar'. The hit number 'Chi il bel sogno di Doretta' comes desperately early on in the piece, after which we always seem to be on the verge of another great tune that never quite arrives. Composed to challenge (and cash in on) Lehar's domination of the operetta scene, it charts the vacillations of the Parisian courtesan Magda de Civry between her elderly protector Rambaldo and her young beau Ruggero Lastouc. The poet Prunier tells her she is like a swallow ('una rondine') and eventually – to spare besmirching Ruggero's family with the shame of her past – she abandons her young lover to return to Rambaldo.

Tenor Rolando Villazón turns his hand to opera direction in this production, new to the Deutsche Oper Berlin last year. I feared his ebullient personality and hyperactive stage presence would transfer to his directing skills, crushing the wings of this delicate Swallow in the process. Not a bit of it. Villazón shows admirable restraint in a straightforward, stylish production that contains a good deal of charm. He updates the action from the mid-19th century to the 1920s, which means that Chez Bullier becomes a chic nightclub with flapper girls and feathers. Brigitte Reiffenstuel's stylish costumes look good, and Johannes Leiacker's set for Act 3 wittily suggests the French Riviera via a rowing boat and white sands amid

the palm court pot plants. Villazón adds surrealist touches via a trio of faceless men – mannequins invisible to everyone else – who escort Magda, almost haunting her. This leads to a neat touch at the end when Magda deserts Ruggero.

The Azerbaijani soprano Dinara Alieva, a Bolshoi soloist since 2010, is better known for her Russian – rather than Italian – repertoire, but sings most prettily as Magda. There's a rich darkness to her voice, especially in Doretta's Dream, but there is also an attractive lighter quality later on which is very appealing. Her acting isn't a strength, regularly outshone by Alexandra Hutton's sparky performance as her feisty maid Lisette.



Charles Castronovo's Ruggero moons around with puppy-dog eyes and matinee-idol good looks – a perfect role for his lyric tenor. Alvaro Zambrano provides a good contrast, a vibrant Prunier, if lacking a true legato. He and Hutton work well as the comic pair who reunite before the leading couple part as the opera closes. Roberto Rizzi Brignoli occasionally indulges Puccini's score with a little too much rubato but draws rich playing from the Berlin strings. An understated, stylish production, which could win round some of *Rondine*'s critics. **Mark Pullinger**

A Scarlatti

La gloria di Primavera

Diana Moore *mez* Primavera
Suzana Ograjensek *sop* Estate
Clint van der Linde *counterten* Autunno
Nicholas Phan *ten* Inverno
Douglas Williams *bass-bar* Giove

Philharmonia Baroque Chorale and Orchestra / Nicholas McGegan

Philharmonia Baroque Productions   PBP09 (139' • DDD • S/T/t)

Recorded live at First Congregational Church, Berkeley, CA, October 4-6 & 10, 2015



The serenata *La gloria di Primavera* (1716) was commissioned by the Neapolitan Duke

Nicola Gaetani dell'Aquila d'Aragona for his wife Aurora Sanseverino, although the libretto by her secretary Nicola Giuvo was designed as an expedient celebration of the birth of the Habsburg Archduke Leopold, son of Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI (who had gained the kingdom of Naples as part of the severance package that concluded the War of Spanish Succession). Therefore Alessandro Scarlatti's music was created for the same circle of patrons in Naples, and in collaboration with the same poet, as

Handel's *Acis, Galatea e Polifemo* (1708); the superhuman bass Antonio Manna who sang Jupiter had most likely been Handel's first Polifemo eight years earlier. The first performance, on May 19, 1716, also featured the soprano Margherita Durastanti (Handel's first Agrippina). The four seasons hold a contest to establish supremacy as the most important to the new-born prince; after the triumph of Spring, Jupiter leads the collective prophecy of the coming of a new golden age (as it turned out, the infant Leopold died only a few months afterwards).

Scarlatti's paean is captured in Nicholas McGegan's live recording made in Berkeley in October 2015. The Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra's string-playing is routinely urbane, and the continuo group's realisations are impeccably shaded. Diana Moore is expressive with words and musical details in Spring's splendid arias, such as 'Canta dolce il rosignuolo' (in which woodwinds sweetly imitate a nightingale's song). Suzana Ograjensek's lightly supple timbre, intelligent treatment of melismatic word-setting and lovely melodic phrasing are applied adroitly to Summer's 'Fa che Zeffiro tra fronde' (a rapt description of breezes wafting through trees and grasses, featuring whispering strings and solo flute). Clint van der Linde sings sensitively, albeit with occasional frailty; Autumn's pastoral 'Fuor dell'urna le bell'onde' has beguiling exchanges between murmuring *concertante* upper and lower strings, whereas the countertenor shows a steelier heroic ability in the trumpet aria 'L'offra sempre in pace'. Nicholas Phan's precise florid passagework in 'Di cieco orrore e d'ombra' is one of Winter's gutsier outbursts, although he also has the softly mellifluous 'Sull'orme de' grand'Avi' (with a gentle pair of oboes).

There are also several fine ensembles for the seasons, such as solemn minor-key quartets invoking Jupiter – whose appearance in Part 2 has a theatrical impact thanks to Douglas Williams's resonance and mastery across a wide-ranging tessitura. Quibbles such as a poor choice about where to break between the two discs and minor hyperbolic lapses in an otherwise excellent booklet-note are dissolved by McGegan's experienced direction and the musical finesse of his Californian orchestra. This is a delightfully enjoyable revelation of the elder Scarlatti's genius. **David Vickers**

Verdi

Un ballo in maschera

Gabriele Lechner *sop* Amelia
Luciano Pavarotti *ten* Riccardo
Piero Cappuccilli *bar* Renato
Magda Nádor *sop* Oscar
Ludmila Schemtschuk *mez* Ulrica



Rolando Villazón's production of Puccini's *La rondine* for the Deutsche Oper Berlin

Goran Simić *bass* Samuel
Franco De Grandis *bass* Tom
Georg Tichy *bar.* Silvano
Alexander Maly *bar.* Judge
Franz Kasemann *ten* Servant
Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera /
Claudio Abbado

Orfeo © 2 C907 1621 (133' • ADD • S)

Recorded live, October 26, 1986



Orfeo here rounds up once more a production's cast long known to

collectors in both sound (numerous dealer labels) and vision (see YouTube). Even if Gustavo's, Renato's and the maestro's interpretations can be sampled elsewhere with other artists, this October 1986 live performance from the Staatsoper was well worth making official from original tapes.

Pavarotti mavens will not need reminding that this is one of their man's greatest roles. And he was on some form this evening, fearless in the high tessitura of the 'Teco io sto' duet, while everywhere that unique catch in the voice suggests the frustration and desire

essential to Gustavo's character. Yet does the tenor – despite Abbado's painstaking dynamic sensitivity – sing too much too loudly compared with, say, Björling or Domingo? Maybe, but it's hard to carp.

While Bruson tended to be the more recorded Renato of the 1980s (including for Abbado's 1981 DG La Scala recording), Cappuccilli offers a more aristocratic and perhaps nastier character. The Austrian soprano Gabriele Lechner, only 25 at the time, had taken over Amelia at short notice from Margaret Price during the first run of the production the previous year. She now sounds thoroughly accustomed to both role and colleagues and is 'adequate' in the German sense of that word – comfortable, and doing everything required – but rather neutral alongside Katia Ricciarelli's special passion for Abbado in Milan.

As on that recording with the then ubiquitous Elena Obraztsova, Abbado opts for a large Slavic voice as Ulrica. Schemtschuk certainly fills the role sound-wise, but just hop back to Giulietta Simionato on Solti's 1960 Rome recording (the one Björling didn't quite make) to see what extra juice an Italian voice brings.

Magda Nádor – once to be heard on Harnoncourt's recording of *Der Schauspieldirektor* – is a serviceable but not special Oscar.

The second hero of this performance is Claudio Abbado, who piles on the tension without ever pressing too much (a fault, perhaps, of both the Solti sets, the second of which has Pavarotti in fine voice, and Margaret Price). The thickish sound delivered by the ORF broadcast here makes Abbado's interpretation sound louder and heavier than the DG set while remaining within the same basic approach to each number. There's no shortage of emotion but little sentimentality – except in the retention of (most of?) the generous applause, which is simply de trop for repeated listening.

I would place this set very high up the recommendable list for this opera, alongside the studio Abbado, the less evenly cast Warner Muti set (both these with Domingo) and the important historicists under Panizza (Sony, with Björling) and Toscanini (perhaps the most 'classically' pure). **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparisons:

Panizza (2/39^R, 2/14) (SONY) 88883 72120-2

Toscanini (9/55^R, 7/91^R) (RCA) 88883 79779-2

Solti, r1960-61 (1/62^R, 9/90^R) (DECC) ➔ 475 8278DM2
Muti (12/75^R, 11/88) (EMI/WARN)
 416745-2 or ➔ 566510-2
Solti, r1982-83 (9/85) (DECC) 410 210-2DH2
Abbado (9/86) (DG) 453 148-2GTA2

Verdi

I due Foscari

Plácido Domingo *bar* Francesco Foscari
Francesco Meli *ten* Jacopo Foscari
Maria Agresta *sop* Lucrezia
Maurizio Muraro *bass* Loredano
Samuel Sakker *ten* Barbarigo
Rachel Kelly *mez* Pisana
Lee Hickenbottom *ten* Fante
Dominic Barrand *bass-bar* Servant of the Doge
Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House / Sir Antonio Pappano

Stage director **Thaddeus Strassberger**

Video director **Jonathan Haswell**

Opus Arte ⑤ DVD OA1207D; ⑤ OABD7197D

(122' + 10' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • O • S/s). Recorded live, October 27, 2014

Extra features include Introduction to *I due*

Foscari, Antonio Pappano on the music of *I due Foscari* and Cast gallery



Plácido Domingo could put it no better than Francesco Foscari, the decrepit and embittered Doge. 'So this is the vile reward a white-haired warrior has earned!' Foscari snarls in the third act of Verdi's 1844 opera, as the faceless Venetian nobles demand his retirement. Domingo's barnet may be more pepper-and-salt than white, but he has suffered a similar chorus of disapproval from many critics as he has determinedly laid siege to Verdi's baritone repertoire.

Yet it is Domingo who makes this faltering production matter. Even if some reports suggested the live experience was less impactful, as filmed in the Royal Opera House in 2014 the Spanish tenor-baritone supplies the dramatic conviction that allows us to look beyond Thaddeus Strassberger's faltering staging and into the soul of Foscari Snr. Domingo catches the enfeeblement and disillusionment of the character and his pleas to doomed, condemned son (Francesco Meli's Jacopo Foscari), furious daughter-in-law (Maria Agresta's Lucrezia) and the implacable cadre of Venetian oligarchs have the tang of authentic Verdian angst.

This score, too, deserves to be taken out of the connoisseurs' drawers, at least when it is charged up by Antonio Pappano, who captures Verdi's purple-blue *tinta* with more than a few frissons and adroitly highlights some startlingly chamber music-like orchestration. True, there are too many

handbrake turns from aria to rum-ti-rum cabaletta, and dramatic contours are few in a piece where the villain, Jacopo Loredano, is shadowy simply because Piave's libretto never explains who he is or why he is so nasty. Maurizio Muraro can do little with the role, only partly because his extravagant beard, caught in close-up, clings so precariously to his face.

That's a small detail but one that speaks to the bigger problems of Strassberger's production, which has ideas but struggles to deploy them in a nuanced or dramatically persuasive way. Kevin Knight's designs contrast abstract gantries and tilting chambers with murky videos of the Venetian lagoon; Mattie Ullrich's costumes are 15th-century-ish (Alexander Borgia meets Alexander McQueen) and Bruno Poet's lighting is either Stygian or cranked up to blazing spotlights. It's a shouty show but actually says very little, and the frequent scenes of torture (cue the blackcurrant jam!) soon grow risible.

With Muraro muttering opaquely from the sidelines, this is really a three-person gig, and around Domingo there is excitement but also wildness from both Meli and Agresta. The tenor has the mettle for the part and phrases nicely, but the higher the voice goes, the more it drifts away from the note or spreads unattractively. Agresta would be happier in a less frenetic production and in less exposed music: Verdi wrote the part for the future Lady Macbeth but this is the sound of an increasingly stressed Luisa Miller. **Neil Fisher**

Wolf-Ferrari

I gioielli della Madonna

Natalia Ushakova *sop* Maliella
Kyungho Kim *ten* Gennaro
Daniel Čapkovič *bar* Rafaele
Susanne Bernhard *mez* Carmela
Peter Malý *ten* Cicillo
František Ďuríáč *bass* Rocco
Bratislava Boys Choir; Pressburg Singers; Slovak National Theatre Opera Chorus; Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra / Friedrich Haider

Naxos ⑤ ② 8 660386/7 (123' • DDD • S)

Recorded live in concert at the Great Concert Hall, Slovak Radio, Bratislava, November 29 & December 2, 2015



It's not quite true that this is the 'World Premiere Recording' of Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's über-*verismo* hit of 1911, as Naxos's cover proclaims. A 1976 radio recording – starring Pauline Tinsley and Peter Glossop and conducted by Alberto Erede – has been

doing the rounds for some time. However, this first 'official' recording of the work is welcome, not least in the way it presents the score in clear (if hardly first-rate) sound, sung by a decent (if hardly first-rate) cast. And what a score it is, a dizzying juxtaposition of all sorts of modernistic influences (Debussy, Strauss & Co) against a wild and raucous evocation of Neopolitan street life – the feral dance of Act 3 is a fine example, in which something akin to Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils segues into a sort of naive tarantella.

Part of the reason, indeed, why German and American audiences apparently warmed to it so much before the First World War intervened was due to the way in which it 'othered' the southern Italians, portraying them as a people as wild and dangerously alluring as any other portrayed in operatic exoticism. Wolf-Ferrari's Italo-German heritage certainly informs this score, even if it more generally prevented him finding acceptance in either land. And it was the composer himself who supposedly happened upon the newspaper story on which the plot is based, fashioned into a libretto by Carlo Zangarini and Enrico Golsiciani.

It's a plot that has the dubious distinction of containing barely a single sympathetic character. We have Gennaro, one of *verismo*'s weedier mummy's boys, who is in love with his beautiful half-sister Maliella, who takes sadistic pleasure in taunting him but who succumbs to his advances when he steals the jewels from a statue of the Madonna for her – hence the title. Rafaele, a local gang leader and Lothario, completes the triangle when he falls for Maliella; but, on hearing of her seduction, he abandons her in front of a mocking crowd and leaves Gennaro to suffer his humiliation alone: the tenor duly stabs himself.

There are some genuinely affecting moments, the famous Intermezzo just one example, and tenor and baritone each get a big duet with Maliella – Gennaro's with her is especially notable for emphasising the erotic allure of his sinful deed. It's all pretty shabby and shocking, but undeniably compelling in its sheer energy.

Naxos's set has its problems, though, not least in the rather unalluring Maliella of Natalia Ushakova, whose squally soprano is neither adequately seductive, secure in its tuning nor accurate above the stave, where the part often takes her; many of her words fall by the wayside, too. Kyungho Kim offers a decent, reliable Gennaro, however, and sings with beefy, steady tone throughout. Daniel Čapkovič brings plenty of swagger to Rafaele, and his baritone is pleasingly grainy, if occasionally strained. Susanne Bernhard brings a touching quality



Plácido Domingo adds Francesco Foscari to his growing tally of baritone roles in Thaddeus Strassberger's production, filmed at Covent Garden

to Carmela, mother of Gennaro and Maliella, and about the only pleasant character in the whole thing. Among the smaller roles, some rather shrill ladies make an impression for the wrong reasons.

It's all a decent effort, and an achievement of which Haider and his Bratislava forces can be proud: the conductor paces it all well, and his players keep up impressively. CPO also has a new recording in the pipeline, though, from the same forces that produced their *Francesca da Rimini* (1/16). If you're desperate for a modern *Gioielli* straight away, by all means go with Naxos; otherwise I'd wait to hear what CPO's set is like. Unlike Naxos's, it will probably also come with a libretto. **Hugo Shirley**

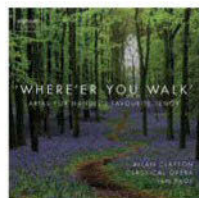
'Where'er You Walk'

'Arias for Handel's Favourite Tenor'

Arne Artaxerxes - Thou like the glorious sun
Boyce Solomon - Part 2, Sinfonia; Softly rise,
 o southern breeze **Handel** Alcina - M'inganna, me
 n'avvegno...Un momento di contento. Alexander's
 Feast - Happy pair. L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il
 Moderato - As steals the morn'. Ariodante -
 Act 2, Sinfonia; Tu vivi, e punito. Berenice - Vedi
 l'ape che ingegnosa. Esther - Tune your harps to
 cheerful strains. Jephtha - Hide thou thy hated
 beams...Waft her, angels. Judas Maccabaeus -
 'Tis well, my friends...Call forth thy pow'rs.
 Il pastor fido - Sol nel mezzo risona del core.

Samson - Let but that spirit...Thus when the sun
 from's wat'ry bed. Semele - See, she appears...
 Where'er you walk **JCSmith** The Fairies - Hark
 how the hounds and horn

Allan Clayton *ten* **Mary Bevan** *sop* **The Choir
 and Orchestra of Classical Opera** / **Ian Page**
 Signum © SIGCD457 (69' • DDD • T/t)



'A singer of great
 excellence. His voice
 was sound, male,
 powerful and extensive.

His tones were natural and he had flexibility enough to execute any passages, however difficult.' The paragon performer described here by Charles Dibdin is the tenor John Beard - Handel's longest-serving singer. It's into his shoes that Allan Clayton steps in 'Where'er You Walk', a collection of arias written for or performed by Beard.

It's a lovely programme - testimony to the flexibility of Beard's technique - taking in everything from the delicate, crooned lyricism of 'Waft her, angels' from *Jephtha* and *Esther*'s 'Tune your harps' to the heartier 'Sol nel mezzo risona del core' (*Il pastor fido*) and 'Call forth thy pow'rs' from *Judas Maccabaeus*. The unifying figure of Beard yields more varied repertoire than either Mark Padmore's 'As steals the

morn...' (Harmonia Mundi, 5/07) or Christoph Genz's 'Un momento di contento' (Coviello, 2008), with arias from *Berenice*, Smith's *The Fairies* and Arne's *Artaxerxes* as well as favourites from *Ariodante*, *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Semele*.

Vocally, though, it's a closer-run thing. Clayton's tenor has been getting steadily stronger and more muscular over the past few years, and there's more evidence of that here. The declamatory recitatives ('Let but that spirit') and arias ('Hark how the hounds and horn', 'Call forth thy pow'rs') ring bright and burnished, thrillingly dramatised. But when it comes to the lyrical, high-floated repertoire Clayton has to work much harder than the lighter Padmore, and for all the sensitivity of phrasing and admirable vocal control he still can't match the fragile beauty of the latter's 'Waft her, angels'. The leaping athleticism of 'Sol nel mezzo risona del core' also finds Clayton carefully lyrical rather than comfortably released.

Ultimately it's a matter of taste: do you prefer the exquisite studio precision of Padmore or the more lived, stage-charged interpretations of Clayton? When the latter comes with the added bonus of a cameo from soprano Mary Bevan ('As steals the morn') and the skilled support of Ian Page and The Orchestra of Classical Opera it's a very attractive package. **Alexandra Coghlan**

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Highlighting musical masters in Prague and Manchester

Two valuable archive sets from Supraphon and a mammoth concert from Barbirolli

Fresh off the presses from Supraphon comes a well-transferred four-CD set devoted to the **Czech Chamber Orchestra** directed from the violin by **Josef Vlach**, an ensemble that in terms of precision and tonal lustre is surely the equal of Rudolf Barshai's Moscow Chamber Orchestra. Dvořák is represented by the E major Serenade and the *Czech Suite*, both of them rhythmically buoyant and vibrantly played, the Suk E flat Serenade that shares the same CD equally luminous. Tchaikovsky's Serenade in C combines charm, sweetness and incisive attack, while a Mozart sequence, including a meaty *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, is memorably stylish. Debussy's *Dances* and Stravinsky's *Apollon musagète* demonstrate Vlach's skill at keeping dancing scores trim while honouring their balletic roots, the latter sections of *Apollo* as lively as under, say, Mravinsky or the composer's own baton. Ilja Hurník's Concerto for oboe and piano (with oboist Stanislav Duchon and Hurník himself playing the piano part) and Jiří Pauer's *Symphony for Strings* are engagingly busy and Vlach directs a crisply characterised account of Britten's *Variations on a Theme by Frank Bridge*. Purcell's *King Arthur* Suite also goes well, save perhaps for a rather lugubrious closing Chaconne, and Respighi's *The Birds* benefits from having a modest-sized ensemble on call. All in all, a very enjoyable set and a warming reminder of just how good Vlach's band was. Imagine the Vlach Quartet on a magnified scale and you'll know roughly what to expect.

Respighi pupil **Antonio Pedrotti** studied conducting with Bernardino Molinari and made a number of distinguished recordings with the Czech Philharmonic. They too have been gathered together in a recommendable Supraphon boxed set (three CDs this time), the highlights surely being the constituent parts of Respighi's Roman Trilogy, the closing sections of both *The Pines of Rome* and *Roman Festivals* still sounding

spectacular, especially considering their early stereo vintage. *La boutique fantasque* is a riot of colour and pianist Jan Panenka (who surely deserves a Supraphon 'archive' collection to himself) is the fine soloist in Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*.

One of my favourite recordings in the set is a quick-witted, sprightly account of Brahms's *Haydn* Variations, where middle voices spring to the fore without spoiling the overall balance. I can't think of an account of Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony that I've enjoyed quite so much since Solti's Israel Philharmonic set for Decca was reissued on Eloquence; and although, unlike Solti's, Pedrotti's recording is in mono,

Imagine the Vlach Quartet on a magnified scale and you'll know what to expect

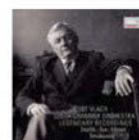
production values are so high that both this and dramatically projected performances of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in Ravel's orchestration and Ravel's own *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No 2 shed their years after a mere few minutes of listening. It's a super collection, again expertly transferred.

If you need convincing that **Sir John Barbirolli** conducting the combined Hallé and BBC Northern Symphony orchestras in Mahler's Seventh Symphony (previously released on BBC Legends) is worth investing in, cue around 9'17" into the second 'Nachtmusik' and note the sweep and warmth of the string-playing: I doubt that even if we had a Bruno Walter recording of the work, it would be more involving than this. The scherzo, which is heavier than the norm, has a troll-like mischievousness about it, with slapping *col legno* strings, while both outer movements pile on the power, especially as they build towards their respective closing pages. Barbirolli gives us a Seventh that isn't afraid to flex its muscles

while keeping its heart to the fore, a reading that generates a maximum of musical interest and stimulation.

But that isn't the biggest surprise that this invaluable release has in store for us. Nielsen's Fifth, a first release, hails from the same mammoth concert. Barbirolli digs into the opening march sequence (from 4'20") with grim resolve and when the all-obliterating side drummer arrives, unless my ears deceive me, he adds 'insult to injury' by thrashing not only the skin and snare of the drum but the rim as well (beam up disc 2, tr 1, 15'28"), becoming a veritable Gene Krupa and making a fair old racket. Still, the orchestras win out in the end and the emotional denouement is overwhelming. The symphony's finale too is immensely convincing, the clinching final chord especially, where the brass build a huge crescendo. I'd draw parallels with Leonard Bernstein in both works, such is the intensity and passion that Barbirolli draws from his pooled resources. The broadcast mono sound is pretty good for 1960 (Paul Baily has effected the transfers), certainly good enough to appreciate some truly remarkable music-making. Very strongly recommended. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Czech Chamber Orchestra / Josef Vlach
Supraphon (M) ④
SU4203-2



Antonio Pedrotti in Prague
Supraphon (M) ③
SU4199-2



Nielsen Sym No 5 Mahler **G**
Sym No 7 Barbirolli
Barbirolli Society (M) ②
SJB1084-85



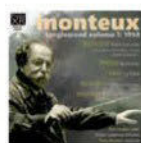
Pierre Monteux: his Beethoven may not be perfect, but it 'combines expressive ardour with tonal purity'

Monteux in Tanglewood

While in the late '50s and early '60s the BBC was recording concerts in mono, in the US stereo was already coming into its own. The first volume of Pristine Audio's newly launched series of Tanglewood stereo concert recordings with **Pierre Monteux** and the Boston Symphony sounds mightily impressive, save for some scarring spots of peak distortion. The breadth, depth and spatial presence of these 1958 productions adds considerably to one's listening experience, excepting maybe for parts of Debussy's *Nocturnes* (all three are performed), where sonic overload is occasionally a distraction. Ravel's *La valse* works itself into a calculated frenzy that quite upstages the conductor's LSO recording (Philips), while the closing passacaglia of Hindemith's *Nobilissima Visione* has a mesmerising effect. Milhaud's dramatic Prelude from *Eumenides* is also very imposing. The first CD is devoted entirely to music by Beethoven, a dashing account of *Leonore* No 3 (with superb trumpet solos), music from the *Prometheus* ballet (the Overture thankfully not played too briskly) and the Violin Concerto with Berl Senofsky, whose available recordings are all too scarce. His Beethoven, although not perfect in all respects, combines expressive ardour with tonal purity, its highlight being the first movement's quietly poised central section and a superb account of Fritz Kreisler's ingenious cadenza. The slow movement has a rapt quality about it that reminded me of Heifetz, and Monteux's conducting, as ever in Classical works, is a model of sound musical judgement. I'd count the

performance as a valuable supplement to the conductor's complete symphony cycle recently put out by Decca Eloquence.

THE RECORDING



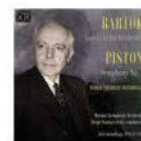
Monteux in Tanglewood
Pristine Audio ® ②
PASC464

Koussevitzky premieres

An earlier era in the BSO's history is also celebrated by Pristine with exceptional performances under **Serge Koussevitzky** of works played within earshot of their respective premieres. Walter Piston's powerful Third Symphony, a musical celebration of the end of the Second World War and presented in its eighth performance (December 31, 1948), is stunningly well played, the fiery *Allegro* second movement especially. Quite how the venerable Russian could have transfused this often difficult music into his players' blood at such short notice is beyond my comprehension, and even more so Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, which we hear in its fourth performance, the finale in particular setting off at a terrific lick, the Boston strings putting the majority of their modern counterparts to shame. It's difficult to believe that such interpretative mastery had been achieved so quickly. Interesting too that the 'Game of Pairs' second movement is played at a tempo that is identical to that on Solti's Chicago recording given that at the time Solti was so (rightly) adamant that slower tempi for the movement were wrong

(though Reiner in Chicago was even faster). The Bartók sounds somewhat cleaner at the top end than it does on the otherwise fine Naxos transfer. A very important CD.

THE RECORDING



Bartók. Piston
Boston SO / Koussevitzky
Pristine Audio ® PASC463

Contemporary Le Guay

Shame on me for not having previously heard the pianist **Claire-Marie Le Guay**, whose Liszt has been praised in these pages and who is the subject of three separate box-sets that French Decca has released and Discovery has recently imported. Collections devoted to Liszt and Haydn/Mozart include many highlights but for me the prize is a five-CD collection of 20th-century music recorded between 2000 and 2004. Le Guay takes a colourist's view of sonatas by Dutilleux, Bartók and Carter as well as Stravinsky's *Petrushka* three movements, offering countless tonal perspectives where others favour raw aggression. I'm not entirely sure whether Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* ballet works as a piano solo: too often it sounds like a fairly straightforward 'piano reduction' of the orchestral score but Le Guay plays it extremely well. The two concertos are gripping in all respects, the G major deft, flexible and fleet-footed, the Left Hand featuring a motoric central section and an angry closing cadenza, superbly supported – for its final onslaught – by the Liège Philharmonic under Louis Langrée. Ravel's concertos share their CD with Schulhoff's jazz-inspired Second Concerto for piano and small orchestra, a strikingly original work with a forceful finale, and there are memorable pieces by Sofia Gubaidulina: *Intrositus*, a concerto for piano and chamber orchestra, an imposing Chaconne and an often entertaining sequence *Musical Toys*. But perhaps the set's highlight is a programme of music for piano and organ – Langlais, Saint-Saëns, Thierry Escaich (Le Guay's featured organist partner), Franck (the lovely *Prélude, fugue et variation*), Guillo and Dupré. A set to relish and repeatedly enjoy, and very well recorded. ⑥

THE RECORDING



20th-Century Piano Music
Le Guay
Accord
© ⑤ 481 2009

Books



Peter Quantrill welcomes a new study of Erik Satie and his milieu:

'Potter's chosen form is authentically Satiean, eschewing the standard narrative of a life-and-works chronology'



Alexandra Coghlan loses herself in Penguin's Book of English Song:

'The skill of Stokes's collection is that it works almost equally well as a resource and as a pleasure-read'

Erik Satie: A Parisian Composer and his World

By Caroline Potter

Boydell Press, HB, 294pp, £29.95

ISBN 978-1-78-327083-5



Satie the Mystic has been more than well covered and explored by previous literature in English. So too

Satie the cabaret artist, Satie remembered by friends and enemies, and Satie the precursor of Debussy and Cage. This new, copiously researched and footnoted study is more reliable and up-to-date than Rollo Myers's study, which had the field to itself for decades, more than a collection of primary sources (Volta, Orledge), more contextual than musicological (Orledge again) but also more universal in scope than narrowly focused monographs (Perloff, Whiting). Caroline Potter has found and filled a gap in writing about a composer who has already attracted attention out of all proportion to the lack of popular familiarity with his music outside one or two pieces, overused and overheard.

Potter's chosen form is authentically Satiean, eschewing the standard narrative of development through a life-and-works chronology. Instead she approaches her subject at an angle, via social, cultural and political topoi as narrow and winding as a Parisian alleyway, and as full of unexpected diversions. An early Montmartre chapter overlooks the young composer assembling the lego-bricks of his musical language while pianolas and barrel-organs play in the streets below. His interest in technology is one of the areas in which she discreetly offers a different, researched perspective from her 'cher maître', Orledge. A survey of the 'texted piano works' – *Embryons desséchés* and the like – throws up an obsession with body parts.

Probably all that links Satie to his exact contemporary Busoni is a brief (hitherto sketchily explored) engagement with the

Italian Futurist movement spearheaded by Filippo Marinetti. The point is less that Satie's omission of bar-lines and phrase marks was influenced by the poetry of Apollinaire, but that they emerged from the same world. Strenuous denials that Satie shared Marinetti's aesthetics, lest he be tainted with the latter's proto-Fascism too, do not ring entirely true: the 'essential and synthetic brevity' of 'our swift and laconic Futurist sensibility' is *Relâche* in a nutshell.

The academic background of both author and publisher should not daunt a general reader. Potter's style is lucid rather than snappy, the illustrations look beyond well-worn score examples and familiar images in the public domain, and there is some discreet myth-busting. Jean Cocteau may have determined on non-musical instruments for the instrumentation of *Parade*, but closer analysis reveals that Satie worked with typical diligence to incorporate them within the score. These include the 'bouteillophone', a wine-bottle organ that must have tickled the fancy of the perennially thirsty composer; one of only two surviving examples is (poorly) reproduced.

Surfing and then immersing yourself in the mass of detail accumulated here should only heighten a perception of positive unease. Satie's music does not behave like the music we all know and love. It doesn't tell stories and it sticks two fingers up at time as a circumscribing boundary to the art-form. Pictures, words and pitch repetitions really do make his work, throughout his career, more like sound-sculpture, and the structure of this study reinforces a sense that Satie was fully himself from the beginning, that he developed as a composer hardly more than his pieces did.

In a poetic comparison of Satie to Gary Lineker, the cricket writer Alan Ross once heard 'similar opportunism, echoes / And chances taken up, exploited –'. Just so, the unlikely origin for *Socrate* is traced in a Platonically themed set of furniture music, but Potter never falls into the trap of taking Satie at face value. 'We want to establish a musical genre made to satisfy needs,' he

had written to Cocteau. 'Art doesn't come into it.' And yet from his sketches emerged an entirely serious meditation that broke new ground with a looser-limbed melos, left tantalisingly undeveloped at his death.

Steering clear of reception history – a wise move – Potter does not address the divide of understanding and sympathy between those, mostly outside or on the fringes of making music, who are deeply drawn to Satie in toto, and those musicians and scholars for whom he was a man of better ideas than music. 'Satie's best joke: the maître of Arcueil,' said Boulez. 'As a title, excellent, so long as it's not followed by music.' A recent BBC Radio 3 documentary quoted Orledge to the effect that Satie's relevance would only grow as post-war modernism was increasingly debunked as a singular blind alley. Composers have to strike an attitude to get anything done. Less so historians. Listeners may follow their own ears, not be led like donkeys into culture wars by generals of taste. **Peter Quantrill**

The Penguin Book of English Song

Seven Centuries of Poetry
from Auden to Chaucer

By Richard Stokes

Penguin Classics, HB, 976pp, £30.00

ISBN 978-0-24-124478-4



What a rich, generous, lose-an-afternoon-and-possibly-an-evening-too kind of book this is. Richard Stokes has

put together a compendium of English verse taking his readers from Chaucer to Dylan Thomas – seven centuries of poetry that charts not just the aesthetic, but also the social and political course of a nation.

Of course we've had anthologies of English poetry from Penguin before, but the difference here is the new focus of the material, the new lens on the camera. All the poems selected have been set to music, often by multiple composers, and it's this



Erik Satie: the subject of an impressive new study published by Boydell Press to mark his 150th birthday

relationship between music and words that is lovingly documented and celebrated here in almost 1000 pages of poetry, stylistic and biographical notes.

Even the contents pages are heavy with interest. Flicking through them, you can see at a glance the poets whose work is most well-trodden. Asked to name some names you'd probably correctly identify Shakespeare, Tennyson, Hardy and Housman, but would you really plump for Auden, or Joyce? All of which raises the question: what makes a good song lyric? The fascinating answer, as this wide-ranging book proves, is that it's not always great poetry that makes for great song. Music, it seems, is a great leveller.

Take 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' (anthologised here, with wonderful democracy, between Byron's 'To a Lady' and Thomas Moore's 'Tis the last rose of summer'). The simplicity, not to say kitsch, of this children's poem is the perfect foil to the exploratory lyricism and wide-eyed eagerness of Richard Rodney Bennett's setting in *Songs Before Sleep*. Stokes himself, in his Introduction, expresses his pleasure at the balance of major and minor poets this filter of song generates, and it's good to see Ivor Gurney's delicate verses and

Walter de la Mare's fanciful sketches and Romantic miniatures given their place alongside Shelley and Milton.

Another fascinating quirk of this anthology is the musical bedfellows it throws up. Sometimes clear fashions are evident (as a cluster of settings by Bax, Finzi and Gurney of Chaucer's 'Mercile Beaute' suggests), while other verses net an extraordinarily diverse selection of composers. John Fletcher's 'Orpheus and his Lute', for example, has been set by (among others) Vaughan Williams, Foulds, German, Rubbra, Somervell and Fritz Hart.

A large part of the delight of the book and its layout – assigning each verse to a particular musical setting, with alternate composers listed at the end – is the mental soundtrack it generates. You flick through Shakespeare and the expansive salon-charm of Quilter's 'Who is Silvia?' jostles with the playful urgency of Schubert's setting. Turn to the facing page and Arne's lilting minuet 'When daisies pied' competes with Madeleine Dring's tongue-in-cheek pastiche and Stravinsky's rather more rhapsodic treatment – a musical palimpsest.

But how should this book be read? The skill of Stokes's collection, his brief pencil-sketch biographical portraits and canny

selections of verses, is that it works almost equally well as a resource and as a pleasure-read. For students of song it's a natural companion to Stephen Banfield's *Sensibility and English Song* (CUP: 1985), a work that redresses the latter's weighting toward the music. It would also be invaluable for anyone planning a recital, helping to identify families of songs, and thematic or stylistic pockets of repertoire.

It seems petty to quibble over detail in such a mammoth project, but inevitably there are some oddities – some omissions and decisions that catch the attention. With such an expert and knowledgeable guide as Stokes authoring this collection, it seems a shame that his introduction is so cursory. At just five pages long, this barely does more than name-check some poets and offer a few highlights of the selection that follows. And it's not a selection without its quirks. Leaving out TS Eliot – a

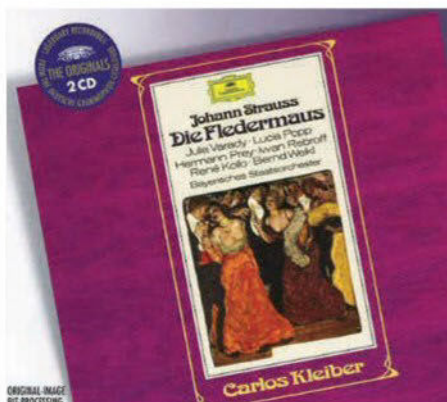
poet so thoroughly adopted as English as to feature in literature courses that exclude all other Americans – seems sad, especially when there are composers such as Britten and Stravinsky setting his verse. Then there's the rather sudden ending to the collection. Auden (1907-73) is the most recently deceased of the poets included, but what about living English poets? Surely both Geoffrey Hill (set by Robin Holloway, among others) and Carol Ann Duffy (John Casken) could have merited inclusion?

The definition of 'song' too, is conveniently fluid throughout. It feels right and natural that a choral setting such as Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* should bring Christopher Smart's breathless epic of a poem into the anthology, but why do other choral settings fail to qualify? Likewise George Crabbe's *The Borough*, or Cardinal Newman's *The Dream of Gerontius*, as set by Britten and Elgar respectively.

Nevertheless, quirks aside, this is a magnificent project – a useable and beautiful book that elegantly exemplifies Dryden's belief that 'Musick and Poetry have ever been acknowledg'd Sisters, which walking hand in hand, support each other'.

Alexandra Coghlan

Classics RECONSIDERED



Andrew Lamb is joined by **Richard Bratby** to revisit and weigh up the pros and cons of Carlos Kleiber's 1975 *Die Fledermaus* on DG



J Strauss II

Die Fledermaus

Julia Varady *Rosalinde* **Lucia Popp** *Adele*
Hermann Prey *Eisenstein* **Ivan Rebroff** *Orlofsky*
René Kollo *Alfred* **Bernd Weikl** *Falke* **Bavarian State Opera Orchestra & Chorus / Carlos Kleiber**
 DG Originals 2 CD 457 765-2
 From 2707 086

The music comes across with a freshness that must be difficult to achieve in so familiar a work, and time and again there are details that make a point 'tell' – a detail of instrumentation, a tempo that seems just that bit different and yet compellingly right, or a subtle inflection or nuance such as the pregnant pauses in Rosalinde's 'Mein Herr,

was dächten Sie von mir?' The singers generally maintain an impeccable standard. Hermann Prey, though a baritone in a tenor *buffo* part, manages Eisenstein with complete assurance and conviction. René Kollo is a suitably contrasted light-toned singing teacher, but Bernd Weikl's scheming Falke would be more effective for being more firmly projected. There's a particularly impressive pair of leading ladies. Lucia Popp may miss a little of the flightiness of Eisenstein's maid, but her vocal talents are too well known to need extolling further. By contrast, Julia Varady is a relative newcomer to recording. The *csárdás* shows to the full her dramatic ability and the warm beauty of

her voice over its whole range. She is bound to make a big impact in the recording world. That brings us to Ivan Rebroff. What does one make of an interpretation by a man who proceeds to sing as a mezzo-soprano? For the most part it is a very passable mezzo, too, if a little colourless. Occasionally in the music and throughout his dialogue he sounds like something out of *Charley's Aunt*. The result may not be positively objectionable, but it is difficult to see a positive justification for the casting beyond that of sales gimmickry. DG's recorded sound is beautifully clear and spacious. There is just enough dialogue to maintain the operetta atmosphere. **Andrew Lamb** (10/76)

Andrew Lamb It's a shock to discover that it's virtually 40 years since I reviewed this recording in LP form for *Gramophone*. I haven't heard it from that day to this, but listening to it afresh confirms – indeed, strengthens – the impressions I had at the time. Above all, perhaps, there's Carlos Kleiber's conducting. I don't suppose I'd then heard him conduct any other Johann Strauss, but afterwards he not only committed *Die Fledermaus* to DVD but also conducted two Vienna New Year's Day concerts. I don't think anyone got more out of the Strausses' music than he did. In my original review, I singled out for mention the subtle nuances in Rosalinde's 'Mein Herr, was dächten Sie von mir?', but there are plenty of other examples. Note, for instance, the way he helps Lucia Popp bring out the contrasts between the three verses of Adele's Act 3 Audition Song.

Richard Bratby It's lovely, isn't it? Practically a masterclass in supporting a voice and characterising an aria through the accompaniment. Kleiber's merely

bringing out what Strauss wrote, of course – those rustic little oboe flourishes, the quiet trumpets when Adele imagines herself playing a queen; but I can't think of another account where they sound quite so bright-eyed. As you say, Kleiber just found so much in the music of the Strauss family, and the more you listen to this set, the more detail you hear. To take your other example, I love the silky way that Kleiber's violins drape themselves over Julia Varady's voice at the words 'Ganz traulich und allein'. But it's so easy to lose yourself in details that it's important to say that it never once feels fussy. In fact, the overwhelming impression that I get, certainly, is of spontaneity: the sheer freshness of the whole thing.

AML Altogether, I reckon that Kleiber gets more out of this work than any other conductor on record. To dwell a little on the purely orchestral contribution, I do regret that recordings habitually omit the original Act 2 ballet music. However, if we have to have the *Thunder and Lightning*

polka instead, then I can't imagine anything better than we have here – an absolutely storming performance. As for what you've said about the two ladies, there have been some other excellent pairs on disc, but I don't believe there can have been any better than Varady and Popp. The former fully justifies the 'Bravo! Bravissimo!' of her fellow guests for her *csárdás*, and the latter is a delightfully vivacious and flirtatious young maid. Thus far, I reckon the DG recording sets the standard against which all other recordings need to be judged.

RB Which brings us to the men. I see you liked Hermann Prey as Eisenstein back in 1976, and I've got to agree – a baritone in a tenor part, maybe, but he does it with immense style, and it's terrific that he has all that darkness to unleash when Eisenstein unmasks himself in the Act 3 finale. (I get the impression Kleiber enjoyed that moment, too.) René Kollo is just right as Alfred – you wouldn't expect the kind of singing teacher who makes late-night calls on married ladies to be a Heldentenor.



Carlos Kleiber: 'Gets more out of this work than any other conductor on record'

Do you still have reservations about Bernd Weikl as Falke, though? I rather like the softer grain of his voice: there's a sort of *Volksoper* quality about it. And then there's this set's one really serious sticking point – Ivan Rebroff as Orlofsky. *Chacun à son goût*, and all that, but I know that his performance really divides people.

AML Generally, I'm not a fan of Hermann Prey, because of what seems to me a touch of arrogance in his voice. Here, though, I think he's splendid, reaching all the high notes and singing with utmost character – not least in the watch duet in Act 2. I'm unsure quite why I originally felt that Bernd Weikl's Falke would be more effective if more firmly projected, and I certainly don't have such a reservation on rehearsing his performance. Rather, if I have any doubts with the males, they are with Kollo's Alfred and whether one should really have a more refined, more Italianate voice. Altogether, though, Prey, Kollo, Weikl and Benno Kusche (as Frank) make a thoroughly admirable foursome of

principal male singers. But, as you say, there's the vexed question of Rebroff's contribution as Orlofsky. It would be good to know how you judge this.

RB What to say? Rebroff was essentially a sort of novelty bass-baritone, and he performs the entire role in falsetto as a mezzo-soprano. I know you thought his casting was a bit of a gimmick at the time – maybe the DG team felt they had to compete with Karajan's 1960 Decca recording, with its all-star Gala sequence – but I don't imagine that Rebroff's fanbase these days is quite what it was. So it really depends on your tolerance of that timbre. My cat put his ears back and left the room as soon as Rebroff came on, but actually I think he does a surprisingly tasteful job, sweeter-sounding than he might have been; and I found myself warming to the pantomime-dame quality of his dialogue. But then, I like my 'Fledermice' on the raffish side. This is a party, after all, and not the most respectable. Rebroff certainly adds a touch of the bizarre.

AML I can well understand why DG selected Rebroff for the part, and not only because of his ability to sell recordings at that time. After all, he was a native German who passed himself off as Russian and who had, according to his Wikipedia entry, a vocal range that extended to four-and-a-half octaves. Thus he was perfectly capable of singing the role of Orlofsky as a mezzo-soprano. Indeed, as I said in my original review, his singing of the part is really pretty good, though I have a slight sense of him sending the music up. It's in the dialogue that I found him reminding me of Charley's aunt, and it's this that still troubles me most. The speaking voice doesn't really match the singing voice, and in the final reckoning I find his whole performance rather grotesque and really quite spooky.

RB But is it spooky enough to mar the recording as a whole? In every other respect, I sense we're broadly in agreement. This is a glorious *Fledermaus* and, for me, one of the special things about it is the way it turns even its modest failings into strengths – it's like alchemy. You mentioned Prey's touch of arrogance, for example, and of course that's Eisenstein all over. The same with Kollo's slight lack of refinement. This feels like a genuine cast of characters, playing off each other and becoming something that's bigger than the sum of their (pretty impressive) parts. And that comes back, once again, to Kleiber and the atmosphere he creates – its warmth, its energy, its unaffected Viennese style, all supported by a Bavarian State Orchestra that's never sounded more alive. It sparkles, it glows; for me, it hits all the right spots.

AML You rightly sum up our agreement on the recording's glories. Unfortunately, though, Rebroff's contribution is indeed, for me, sufficiently spooky to spoil the whole thing. Act 1, before he enters, is glorious – but for consistent enjoyment of the whole work I'd sooner turn to any of the other fine recordings that have been available over the years. Alas!

RB It'll never be first choice as a library recommendation, then: Rebroff's just too much of a problem. But that apart, we're still left with some treasurable singing, a real party atmosphere, and one of the supreme Straussians of his – or any – time conducting like a man in love. A classic recording? I can only say that I wouldn't want to be without it. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

...when classical meets jazz

In a follow-up to his 2014 feature on jazz/classical crossover, **Philip Clark** takes a look at more recent efforts – over the past 50 years or so – to combine elements of the two genres as a way of creating new sounds

During the late 1950s and forwards into the 1960s, that most idealistic of times when apparently anything

was possible (all you had to do was try), the mission to find common cause between jazz structures, jazz improvisation and

all the cultural paraphernalia associated with classical music was gathering pace. Benny Goodman recorded with Leonard Bernstein, who in turn recorded an album with Dave Brubeck, whose label Columbia Records had, in 1957, recorded and released a record declaring *The Birth of the Third Stream* – on which Dimitri Mitropoulos conducted Gunther Schuller alongside Miles Davis performing music by the Modern Jazz Quartet's Bach-immersed pianist John Lewis. Then the sequel album *Modern Jazz Concert* slammed music by bassist Charles Mingus and jazz pianist-composer-theorist George Russell (featuring pianist Bill Evans) into pieces by Milton Babbitt and Harold Shapero. Babbitt meets Mingus? Mitropoulos and Miles? An era when literally anything seemed possible.

Fifty years later, a whole new generation of musicians identifying themselves somewhere on the spectrum between jazz instrumentalists-improvisers and composers are following up on those same lines of investigation, and this guide is essentially an update on the feature I wrote for *Gramophone's* January 2014 issue in which I traced the jazz/classical crossover itch through from the 1920s to the 1960s.

And the personalities might evolve, but fundamental musical questions remain tantalisingly imponderable. Reconciling the free-spirited impulse of the jazz improviser, primed to discover the thing they want to play through the experience of actually playing it, with the deeply ingrained instinct of the composer to fix structure, instrumental detail and harmonic context is a real labour of Hercules. These 10 musicians have all grappled with those musical and philosophical questions, to arrive at 10 radically different answers. As ever with jazz, though, finding answers only digs up new questions – throwing everyone back into fantastic chaos. Which is exactly how we like it. **G**



Jazz bassist William Parker performing at the 2013 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival in New Orleans, Louisiana

**Coleman****Skies of America**

Ornette Coleman *alto sax*
LSO / David Measham
Sony

Ornette Coleman's piece (recorded 1972) sits as a point of transition between those 1960s experiments and the realisation that orchestral music could indeed be psyched by free-jazz energies. In truth, this is a flawed record: Coleman's group and the LSO appearing together would have contravened Musicians' Union legislation, which derailed his original concept. His solo saxophone cutting through his quaggy, prismatic orchestral writing is a visceral thrill.

**Halvorson****Illusionary Sea**

Mary Halvorson Septet
Firehouse 12 Records
New York guitarist-composer

Mary Halvorson is representative of a new generation of 30-something musicians entirely adept at both composition and improvisation – and who regard with suspicion the idea that they ought to be separated. *Illusionary Sea*, scored for a septet of her close musical associates, is Halvorson's chanciest and most compelling release to date: a labyrinth of extended compositional forms mercilessly recontextualised via improvisation and group collective thought.

**Braxton****Composition No 169 + (186 + 206 + 214)**

Anthony Braxton,
James Fei, Chris Jonas,

Slovenia RO / Jackson Moore *saxs/conductors*
Leo Records

Braxton is a polymathic ideas man whose work often embraces the freest of free improvisation as well as meticulously conceived composition. This is a meta-montage – or, as he terms it, 'a multiple switch track platform' – in which his compositions Nos 186, 206 and 214 interject, blend or collide into 169. If the spatial dimensions of Ives and Birtwistle appeal, this could be for you.

**Shorter****Orbits**

Wayne Shorter *ten & sop sax*
Various artists / Robert Sadin
Verve Records

Best known for replacing John Coltrane in Miles Davis's quintet, Wayne Shorter had already demonstrated his compositional high-intelligence in a series of 1960s Blue Note albums. In 2003, he took his quartet into the studio accompanied by a revolving cast of orchestral musicians. Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas brasileiras No 5* was opened up for improvisation, but most striking of all is *Orbits*, Shorter's classic piece written for Davis, now given an orchestral backbone.

**Penderecki****Actions for Free Jazz Orchestra**

New Eternal Rhythm Orch /
Krzysztof Penderecki

Intuition Records
Here's Polish composer Penderecki working with a starry cast of European improvisers including Kenny Wheeler, Peter Brötzmann, Paul Rutherford and Han Bennink at the Donaueschingen Festival in 1971. (Free jazz trumpeter Don Cherry also features on the album.) Penderecki's piece deploys all his familiar textural techniques, peppered with concentrated solo spots and (bizarrely) some swing jazz bass patterns.

**Ward****Glass Shelves and Floor**

Alex Ward Quintet
Copepod
Alex Ward's work has

encompassed free improvisation, extended composition and songwriting. This piece deals directly with the philosophical contradictions surrounding 'composing' for improvisers. The score provokes them into action using staff notation, verbal cues, open-ended harmonic sequences and free-for-alls to open up pathways that they'd be unlikely to find on their own. Two performances (one live, one studio) are utterly distinct, yet both are recognisably Ward's piece.

**Washington****The Epic**

Kamasi Washington's group,
choir, orchestra
Brainfeeder

This multi-CD, through-conceived three-hour miscellany of music by Los Angeles-born saxophonist Kamasi Washington was the jazz story of 2015. Washington's funk-rooted jazz group – rocked by affiliations to free jazz and hip-hop – is cushioned by meticulous writing for string orchestra and choir; and on disc three, when all the churning grooves and athletic improvisations suddenly deal up Debussy's *Clair de lune*, the cultural grab of this music becomes clear.

**Westbrook****A Bigger Show**

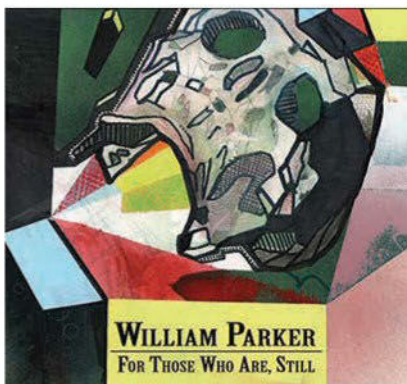
The Uncommon Orchestra
ASC Records
Mike Westbrook, 80 this year

and easily the UK's most intriguing jazz composer, keeps his art noticeably fresh and searching in this dystopian – more JG Ballard than jazz ballad – two-hour work for three voices (Martine Waltier, Billy Bottle, and Kate Westbrook – who also wrote the words) and jazz orchestra, which uses the analogy of a fairground to explore the effects of the internet on modern society. It's unsettling and joyful in equal measure.

**Schneider****The Thompson Fields**

Maria Schneider Orchestra
ArtistShare

Composer Maria Schneider was mentored by Gil Evans, Miles Davis's arranger-in-chief. Now she's in her mid-fifties, her music has fully distilled that influence, and this portrait in sound of the Minnesota countryside where she grew up is strikingly beautiful while packed with unexpected harmonic detours and pliant orchestral shadings. The sounds dance to catch the light, the composed music feeding the improvisers' ideas – but never reducing itself to the lowly level of background scoring.

**Parker**

For Those Who Are, Still William Parker *dbl bass* NFM SO and Choir / Jan Jakub Bokun, et al
AUM Fidelity

New York bassist-composer-improviser William Parker is the nearest equivalent that contemporary jazz has to a Duke Ellington or Charles Mingus – a musician who manages to pull the whole experience of jazz history, and beyond, into work keenly negotiating space between written ideas and in-the-moment invention. This box-set focuses on Parker's activities as a composer. *Ceremonies*

For Those Who Are Still (recorded in Wrocław) has the musicians improvising with, and sometimes against, a fully scored maelstrom of lines for the NFM SO and Choir. *Red Giraffe with Dreadlocks* espouses Parker's principle of 'universal tonality': put together musicians from different cultures, give them composed beginnings – and improvised webs of association will sort out the rest.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Haydn's Symphony No 48, 'Maria Theresia'

Should timpani and trumpets be included? What about continuo? 'Lost autographs equal polarised opinions,' says **Nalen Anthoni**, who explores these through the many available recordings of this symphony

The components of this symphony's story are somewhat muddled. The work was not, as was once thought, written for Empress Maria Theresia's visit to Eszterháza in September 1773. Newer evidence reveals the date of composition to be 1769. Was so regal and thrusting a work composed instead for a celebration of Prince Nikolaus I? Or was it composed in advance for another royal occasion: the empress's visit to a festival at Kittsee in July 1770? If so, would the Habsburg head of state have been surprised, even displeased, that trumpets (*clarini* or *trombe*), the traditional instruments of pomp and circumstance, were absent in the three fast ceremonial movements?

Nikolaus I would have known why: his orchestra of the day didn't have any of these instruments. But mollifying Her Imperial and Royal Majesty might have been difficult – except that Haydn had a trick up his sleeve. He substituted horns (*corni*) in C, to be played as written (alto) rather than in the conventional way, an octave lower (basso). And C alto horns, at exactly the same pitch as trumpets in C, are as brassy powerful and penetrating within their own distinctive timbre. The symphony, presenting no complications in a slow movement written for horns in F, would have triumphed whatever the event. Yet there is another puzzle: why had Haydn omitted timpani, also instruments of pomp and circumstance?

Events following a catastrophe at Eszterháza in November 1779 helped shed some light, but also raised more questions.

Many of Haydn's orchestral scores – including the autograph of No 48 – were burnt in a fire. Pragmatically, Haydn replaced the losses by buying from Viennese publishers a large collection of parts, among which was a set for this symphony that showed the inclusion of timpani plus trumpets doubling horns. Were they added by the Viennese? Or by copyists on Haydn's instructions after 1773, when trumpets were regularly employed at Eszterháza?

THE SCORING DEBATE INTENSIFIES

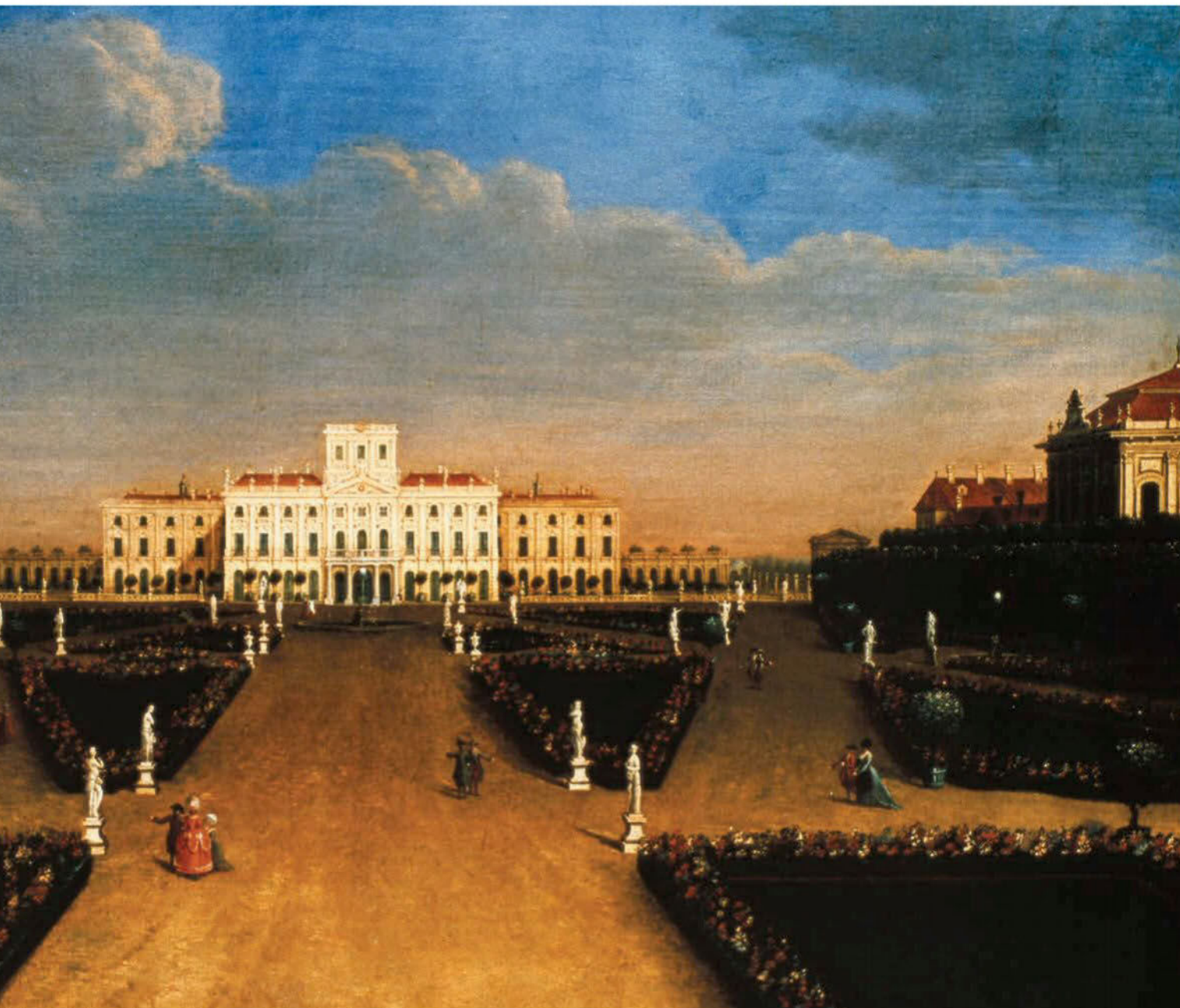
During his research in the 1950s, HC Robbins Landon (founder of the Haydn Society) unearthed in the archives of Eszterháza Palace 10 versions of these supplements. James Webster (Cornell University) rejects them as spurious, trusting only the parts copied by Joseph Elssler. So do Andreas Friesenhagen and Christin Heitmann in their edition of the work (Bärenreiter: 2012), ruling out 'the possibility that any of the trumpet or timpani parts originated with Haydn'. But if they were inauthentic, why hadn't Haydn destroyed them? Moreover, the presence of trumpets and timpani in symphonies Nos 20, 32, 33, 38 and 41, which also feature the C alto horn, had set a precedent for this combination. Later symphonies, Nos 50, 56 and 60, were similarly scored; which may be why Simrock, Breitkopf & Härtel and Eulenburg incorporated these extras into their editions of No 48. Yet variations in layout arose. Ernst Praetorius (Eulenburg: 1940), for example, split the notation and



Painting of Eszterháza Palace, 18th century

assigned separate roles for *corni* in C alto and *clarini* in C. By contrast, Landon (Doblinger: 1966) confined them to a single staff, thus giving conductors the choice of one or the other. In the early 1980s Landon went a step further by discrediting all extant versions of the timpani part and reconstructing one of his own.

This was a bold step – but the boldest occurred more than 30 years earlier, when Landon resurrected the C alto horn in modern guise. The natural horn of Haydn's day, with replaceable crooks to change pitch, and hand-stopping through the bell to make the instrument partially chromatic, had by the 19th century been superseded by the valve horn in F and the double horn in F/B flat. Both rendered obsolete the natural version, pitched at A=c430,



whose renaissance as part of the period-instrument movement had to wait another quarter-century or so. But Landon – after the Second World War based in Vienna, where he began recording Haydn – wasn't waiting. He commissioned a pair of natural horns in C alto pitched at the Viennese standard of A=443; unfortunately it was a little late for **Jonathan Sternberg**, who in 1949 conducted the Vienna Symphony Orchestra – with timpani, and trumpets replacing horns – in the first recording of No 48. The original Haydn Society LP is long gone and appears not to have reached these shores, but a download from iTunes (it's also available at sounds.bl.uk) reveals a performance of pioneering zeal. Mogens Wöldike's 1951 Haydn Society recording of No 50 featured Landon's

C alto instruments, but their access appears to have been denied for his 1953 Decca/John Culshaw production (reissued by Danacord) of No 48, with the Danish State Radio Chamber Orchestra. So trumpets it had to be.

Lost autographs lead to polarised opinions – and they are reflected in the recordings of this work. There are musicians who agree with Roger Fiske's 'There is much to be said for omitting trumpets and drums altogether' and those who believe that there is also much to be said for not doing so. Five combinations vie for attention: trumpets and timpani (Sternberg, Wöldike, Davies); basso horns, trumpets and timpani (Scherchen, Fricsay, Adolph, Janigro, Maksymiuk); alto horns and timpani (Goberman, Dorati,

Solomons, Pinnock, Fischer, Brüggén); alto horns, trumpets and timpani (Fey); and alto horns only (Marriner, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Wordsworth, Goodman, Haenchen, Hogwood). Period instruments are the preserve of Solomons, Pinnock, Goodman, Hogwood and Brüggén.

STRIKING OUT, POST-WAR

Quite a field, and one that began with Sternberg (who turns 97 this month) breaking into an immediate post-war market exposed to only a handful of late Haydn symphonies. The raw, militant sounds of a hitherto unknown No 48 might thus have been startling; but the performance wasn't well received. American critic Cornelius G Burke,



Left to right: detail from a portrait of Empress Maria Theresia by Matthias de Visch (1702-65); portrait of Joseph Haydn by Luigi Schiavonetti (1765-1810)

in *The Collector's Haydn* (Philadelphia and New York, 1959), considered it 'distressingly inferior', but commended **Mogens Wöldike** for having 'a sure hand in dispensing the splendours of pageantry, and his very skilful orchestra displays a fine unity of calculated enthusiasm'. Over six decades later this feels overgenerous, as, after an imposing first movement, a whiff of calculated caution arises from an uninspired slow movement, a bland Menuet and a tepid finale. Regrettably, **Henry Adolph** is a non-starter, stolid and unsubtle, even ignoring the *con sordino* instruction for the violins in the slow movement. Despite timid trumpets and horns in basso, **Antonio Janigro** is lively in the outer movements; but a mite-heavy slow movement (with distant harpsichord continuo) and a ponderously measured

Menuet devalues worth. **Jerzy Maksymiuk** undermines himself with febrile tempos in the outer movements and Menuet, an arbitrary choice of repeats and a poorly characterised Trio, not redeemed by a finer slow movement.

Harsh sound notwithstanding, the version that tops the listings at this point comes from **Hermann Scherchen**, who attracted approbation and aversion in equal measure. His *Handbook of Conducting* (originally published in German, 1929) spells out the following credo: 'A creative artist relies upon the acuteness of his own artistic perception; he hears new tone-colours, he views his materials in a new light, he stamps his own personality upon the music.' And here there's 'personality' aplenty. A speed of crotchet=134 for the first movement may seem manic, but then

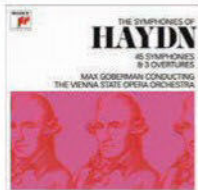
you are pulled up short with another precept: 'Sounds must be commanded and to conduct them is to give them shape.' Scherchen's shaping of this movement is masterly, with contrasts between fiery momentum and calmer contemplation heightened without slackening pulse. Reach the *Adagio* for the surprise of a tempo akin to *largo*; but with command over contour and phrase, the themes sing. If they do not, 'we miss one thing: the soul of music, the song that gives inward life to musical sounds'. Uncannily in agreement in this movement is **Ferenc Fricsay**, whose tempo is identical to that of Scherchen, and who shares with Scherchen the ability and artistry to extract poetry while holding the tension. It's a moment of magical inspiration not replicated by Fricsay in the other movements.

A TASTE OF POSSIBILITY

Vienna State Opera Orchestra / Góberman

Sony © 14 88843 07394-2

He died before completing the scheduled recording of all the symphonies. But



remember Góberman as the first to introduce C alto horns for No 48, delighting aficionados; and remember Landon, who also made it a possibility for the future.

THE URTEXT EXPERIENCE

ASMF / Marriner

Philips © 10 454 335-2PB10

Marriner abandons the violin to follow Pierre Monteux's advice: 'Stand up and conduct like



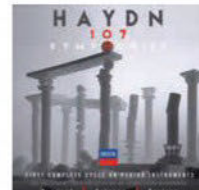
a man.' The result isn't a performance directed from the first desk, but an interpretation enacted through a single sagacious mind on the podium.

PERIOD-INSTRUMENT SUCCESS

OAE / Brüggen Decca © (36 discs) 478 9604

'The past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.'

TS Eliot's words echo in Brüggen, who



outstrips other period-instrument practitioners in his quest for what is real. His is a modern understanding of historic content.

THE 'REAL' PREMIERE

And then it happened. Swaggering into the early 1960s was a sonic event not heard in this symphony perhaps for 150 years: the marvel of C alto horns in full cry, slotting into the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by **Max Gieberman** for his own Library of Recorded Masterpieces label. In this Landon-produced recording, trumpets were ignored but timpani included. Here was the real premiere, Gieberman placing his imprint on No 48 in her rightful colours. It was a brand-new leap forwards, though not all aspects of the performance sit well. Gieberman's strengths are his concept of nobility and feel for orchestral balance. Yet in execution, flow is not as uninhibited as it might be; some rhythmic inflexibility, particularly noticeable in the *Adagio*, tends to tie notes to bar-lines, limiting phrases from expanding and contracting according to melodic or harmonic progressions. Nevertheless, this recording holds its place as the first to display the full splendour of Haydn's imagination.

SETTING THE TIMPANI ASIDE

Rightful colours? Full splendour? Not perhaps for purists who feel that a sacrosanct text has been sullied by an 'unauthorised' addition – timpani; such listeners are catered for by musicians of similar persuasion. Not persuasive at all, though, are the players of the **Orpheus Chamber Orchestra**, superfine in execution but utterly dispassionate, distancing themselves from total involvement, the slow movement depressingly deadpan. If the absence of a conductor is keenly felt, the presence of one is not always positive either, as with **Barry Wordsworth**. He certainly feels the emotion of the slow movement and shapes it accordingly. Bite and attack in the last movement are good, but the remaining movements are not up to scratch.

Enter **Roy Goodman** with his period-instrument recording 'conducted from the harpsichord'. The instrument obtrudes, a thorn in the side of the music, an example of continuo too often played continuously. Webster maintains that Haydn 'almost certainly' didn't favour this practice, perhaps for reasons explained by Charles Rosen: 'The energy of late-18th-century music is not based on a harmonic sequence that needs to be outlined by a keyboard, it is based on the articulation of periodic phrasing and modulation; emphasising the harmonic rhythm is therefore not only unnecessary but positively distracting.' There is no such distraction from **Christopher Hogwood**, who allows the opening *Allegro* its own ebb and flow; phrases are relaxed and shaped



In his 1975 recording, Marriner relishes Haydn's Symphony No 48 as the composer apparently left it

according to contrasts implied without damaging the pulse, the period-instrument orchestra is impressive, the C alto horns are lustrous. It's an encouraging beginning that, alas, is not sustained, as Hogwood then slips into routine sameness, and eminence slips away. Orchestral eminence graces **Hartmut Haenchen**'s recording, too, but polite understatement in the first and third movements, dogged pacing in the second and a finale played four- (rather than two-) in-a-bar, not to mention an intrusive harpsichord as well, all make for a negative reaction.

Reach out instead to **Neville Marriner**, the first off the Urtext starting block

in 1975. And redoubtable he is, too; the polished expertise of all his recordings here enhanced by a deeper than usual subjective engagement. Horns are a touch backward, but otherwise drama and effervescence in the outer movements stand alongside a lyrically inflected *Adagio* and a vitally pointed *Menuet* with sombre *Trio*. Marriner relishes the work as Haydn apparently left it.

Yet doubt nags: did he separately compose or supervise a part for timpani? The question may be irrelevant to some but apposite to those who feel that without a supporting foundation textures ring hollow and sections appear to float.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1949 Vienna SO / Sternberg	Haydn Society Ⓢ HS 9112; HSLP 1003
1950 Vienna St Op Orch / Scherchen	Tahra Ⓜ Ⓢ Ⓢ TAH680/81
1951 Berlin RIAS SO / Fricsay	DG Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ 445 421-2GDB2; Ⓢ (45 discs) 479 2691GB45
1953 Danish St Rad CO / Wöldike	Danacord Ⓜ Ⓢ Ⓢ 2AC0CD703/4 (12/53*)
1960s Slovak PO / Adolph	Pilz Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ CD254
1961/62 Vienna St Op Orch / Gieberman	Sony Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ 88843 07394-2 (4/15)
1963 Zagreb Rad SO / Janigro	Vanguard Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ ATMCD1495
1971 Philh Hungarica / Dorati	Decca Ⓢ (33 discs) 478 1221DX33
1975 ASMF / Marriner	Philips Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ 454 335-2PB10
1978 Polish CO / Maksymiuk	EMI Ⓜ Ⓢ Ⓢ 569767-2
1986 Orpheus CO	DG Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ 419 607-2GH (5/87)
1989 English Concert / Pinnock	Archiv Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ 463 731-2AB6 (2/90*); Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ 479 3609AB12
1989 Capella Istropolitana / Wordsworth	Naxos Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ 550382 (9/91); Ⓢ (34 discs) 8 503400 (1/09)
1990 Hanover Band / Goodman	Hyperion Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ CDH55119 (7/93*)
1990 CPE Bach CO / Haenchen	Berlin Classics Ⓜ Ⓢ Ⓢ 0010242BC
1992 AAM / Hogwood	L'Oiseau-Lyre Ⓢ (32 discs) 480 6900DB32; Ⓢ (36 discs) 478 9604 (11/94*)
1995 Austro-Hungarian Haydn Orch / A Fischer	Nimbus Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ NI7041; Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ NI5530/34 (1/98); Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ NI7722 (4/09)
1996 OAE / Brüggen	Philips Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ 462 117-2PH5 (6/99); Ⓢ (36 discs) 478 9604
2009 Stuttgart CO / DR Davies	Sony Ⓢ (37 discs) 88697 44331-2 (1/10)
2009 Heidelberg SO / Fey	Hänssler Classic Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ CD98 535 (8/10)



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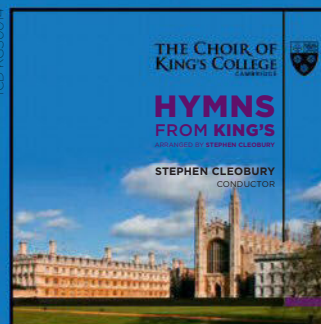
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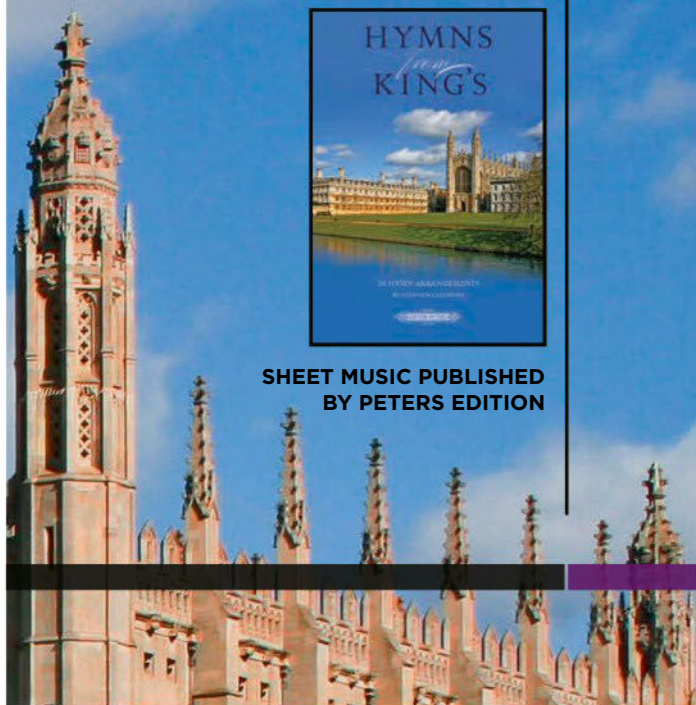
*Thine be the Glory
Alleluia, sing to Jesus
Abide with Me*



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Those in favour of the timpani part can perhaps be reassured by the words of timpanist Jeremy Montagu: 'Haydn was himself a competent timpani player and his writing is always pointed and effective.' Why reject the opportunity to be 'pointed and effective' in No 48, too?

Following in the same vein as Goberman in terms of scoring there is **Antal Dorati**, alert to the harmonic and dynamic terrain in the first movement and fleet of foot in the last. The middle movements are not similar in quality, the *Adagio* mildly somnolent, the Menuet of clodhopping gait attached to a lugubrious Trio.

And what of **Dennis Russell Davies**, who (in 2009) preferred trumpets to C alto horns? Let's say a bafflingly perverse decision isn't mitigated by an overall lack of imagination exacerbated by a restrictive harpsichord continuo. Similar in outlook is Derek Solomons (CBS, 5/84 – nla), the letter (Landon's edition, but with his reworked timpani part) exactly obeyed, yet – with the slow movement a possible exception – not drawing real intensity of expression from line or phrase. All repeats are dutifully observed in the cause of 'authenticity' but, with no decoration of notes or variation in articulation, each sounds like a rerun of an approved take. The litany of woes continues with **Trevor Pinnock**, who, like Janigro (slow movement only), Goodman, Haenchen, Davies and Solomons, creates a role for the harpsichord, its circumscribing chatter disturbing the inner fabric of the music while also diminishing its overall power. It's another example of a fashion for literalism, 'invariably the lowest and least level of meaning' (Richard Rohr).

Adám Fischer, free of such strictures, empowers his players to go behind the notes and release the spirit within the music. And spirited is his response to the three fast movements, phrases tautened and released, accentuation varied, pacing adroitly managed even in the wistfully atmospheric slow movement. A selective use of single strings in places adds a welcome touch of variety to textures; so do the Vienna horns. A year later, and we're greeted by an equally elevated, but differently manifested, standard of performance from **Frans Brüggen**, whose imprint runs deep. Opening and closing movements of majestic breath may not quite match Haydn's tempo markings, but a vibrant pulse, strings rooted to distinct bass-lines, and instrumental details never submerged all speak another story. Brüggen distinguishes and differentiates particulars that cannot be expressed if clock time is used solely as a measure



Thomas Fey: preoccupied more with producing a modern interpretation than anything that's Urtext

of pace. Perception overrides obedience in a flowing *Adagio*, inner voices clearly woven within the orchestral balance, and drama heightened in the horn- and oboe-writing before the recapitulation. Lightly varied accents turn the Menuet into a dignified dance, its dignity – abruptly jolted by the *fortissimo* in the second part – sternly portrayed. Such are the fruits of Brüggen's enlightened re-creative imagination.

COMETH THE MAVERICK

So that's it? Not quite. Cometh the hour, cometh the maverick who mixes period timpani and brass with modern strings and woodwind; and who blots credentials by fusing trumpets with C alto horns. His name: **Thomas Fey** – intense, involved and communicating an unconstrained emotional commitment to his musicians, connecting with them to confront the abyss. Forget reservations about the presence of trumpets; they are used only to reinforce chosen moments in the musical argument which unfolds in a first movement that's entralling in its blend of speed, spaciousness, attack and timing. And both halves are reiterated – with a difference. Fey ornaments melodic lines and radically embellishes the timpani part the second time around. He offers another view, and does so for other repeats observed. Continue into an *Adagio* of tender gravity, the supporting strings unerringly weighted with the melodic line, the atmosphere enhanced by subdued semiquaver triplets from second violins that turn ghostly in the second half as more

depths are plumbed. Horns and oboes emerge before the recapitulation in sharper contrast; and thereafter, Fey intensifies the poignancy and desolation uncovered, revealing musicianship and conducting of distinction. Breaking the spell is a crisply enunciated Menuet taken in three rather than one, perhaps to highlight a darker, rougher edge to the C minor Trio, the *da capo* then inviting a smile: at Fey's effrontery? Or his sheer earthy humour? You decide. But if he takes you aback here, prepare for a finale of histrionic impetus, both repeats dynamically garnished by timpani, fabric crystalline, rhythms resilient – a feat of charged motivation and disciplined orchestral virtuosity. Fey is his own man at every turn, eschewing pointless, didactic guesswork about erstwhile performance practices and instead realistically analysing current options. He illuminates the symphony through his own sensibilities and revitalises it for our time. That's authenticity. ⑥

TOP CHOICE

Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra / Fey
Hänssler Classic © CD98 535

'How Haydn was played in his day' does not preoccupy Fey. Rather, he asks: 'How might Haydn be played today?' Fey singlemindedly



probes the psyche of a composer who, he believes, 'bespoke Storm and Stress, was a searcher, experimenter and, ultimately, also a finder'.

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PLAYLISTS

Music inspired by bell-ringing, and a guide to Max Reger's most engaging works

Ring out those bells!

Hannah Nepil recommends works whose origins are in the sounds of bell-ringing

Bell-ringing has been around for millennia. Small wonder that Messiaen, in works like *Couleurs de la Cité céleste*, uses it to convey timelessness. But not all composers have pursued that path. After all, the ringing of bells is a familiar soundtrack to ceremony and, by extension, to the spectrum of accompanying emotions with which ceremony is associated: joy on one side; mourning on the other. It is ripe with symbolic potential.

The bells of Zlonice, where the adolescent Antonín Dvořák studied, inject his First Symphony with grandeur. Purcell radiantly gives thanks in his 'Bell Anthem', and the pealing Kremlin bells in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* make a joyous cacophony of the coronation scene, setting up Tsar Boris for a tremendous fall.

Cacophonous, too, are the tolls of the Witches' Sabbath in Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, and the finale of Shostakovich's Symphony No 11, though both these are heavily steeped in dread. Arvo Pärt also explores the darker associations with bells in his lament for Benjamin Britten, but imbues it with his trademark mysticism. And as for Britten himself – he used the bell-like sonorities of the Balinese gamelan to hint at the magical effect of Tadzio's appearances in *Death in Venice*. Harnessing the power of suggestion always was one of this composer's strengths.

- **Pärt** Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten Bournemouth Sinfonietta / Richard Studt **Erato**
- **Dvořák** Symphony No 1 – Allegro Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra / Stephen Gunzenhauser **Naxos**
- **Messiaen** Couleurs de la Cité céleste Yvonne Loriod *pf* Groupe Instrumental à Percussion de Strasbourg / Pierre Boulez **Sony Classical**
- **Berlioz** Symphonie fantastique – Witches' Sabbath Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Sir Colin Davis **Philips**
- **Mahler** Symphony No 6 – second movement Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer **Channel Classics**
- **Purcell** Rejoice in the Lord Alway Collegium Vocale Gent / Philippe Herreweghe **Harmonia Mundi**



Arvo Pärt: master of tintinnabulation

- **Shostakovich** Symphony No 11 – Allegro non troppo (Tocsin) WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln / Semyon Bychkov **Avie**
- **Britten** Death in Venice – Act I, Scene 5: Adziu, Adziu! Sols; City of London Sinfonia / Richard Hickox **Chandos**
- **Mussorgsky** Boris Godunov – Prologue, Scene 2: Coronation Scene Orchestra of the Bolshoi Theatre / Alexander Melik-Pashayev **Melodiya**
- **Rachmaninov** The Bells – Presto ('The Loud Alarum Bells') Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle **Warner Classics**

Exploring Max Reger

Gavin Dixon celebrates the centenary composer's impressively broad output

Writing this issue's in-depth feature on Max Reger (see page 16) gave me the wonderful opportunity to become better acquainted with his music, which is well served by recordings – particularly on German labels.

Reger's flowing melodic style is most apparent in his chamber music. His focused solo writing lends an impressive clarity to the Violin and Clarinet Sonatas, while the Op 74 String Quartet is one of Reger's most harmonically daring works – but somehow one of his most charming, too. The *Suite in the Old Style*, on the other hand, takes us into Reger's neo-Baroque sound world; it is heard here in an evocative and historically significant

recording from Adolf Busch and Rudolf Serkin.

Concertos and variation sets dominate Reger's orchestral output. The Violin Concerto is a multifaceted work, by turns tender and epic, while the *Mozart* Variations demonstrates the subtlety of Reger's orchestration. His mastery of variation form is also evident in the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of JS Bach*, one of several extended sets for piano.

Reger is most famous as an organ composer, though, and the Fantasia and Fugue in D minor finds him exploring all the colours and textures of the German Romantic organ. In addition, choral music figures large in Reger's catalogue, and the *Geistliche Gesänge* demonstrate his delicate textures and subtle harmonic daring. Finally, a real rarity – an album of Reger's Lieder for voice and piano. This is Reger at his most intimate, channelling Schubert in songs of direct, lyrical expression.

- **Violin Sonatas** Ulf Wallin *vn* Roland Pöntinen *pf* **CPO**
- **Clarinet Sonatas Nos 1 and 2** Alan R Kay *cl* Jon Klibonoff *pf* **Bridge**
- **String Quartet, Op 74** Drolc Quartet **DG**
- **Suite in the Old Style** Adolf Busch *vn* Rudolf Serkin *pf* **Guild**
- **Violin Concerto** Benjamin Schmid *vn* Tampere PO / Hannu Lintu **Ondine**
- **Mozart Variations** Bavarian RSO / Sir Colin Davis **Philips**
- **Variations and Fugue on a Theme of JS Bach** Markus Becker *pf* **Thorofon**
- **Fantasia and Fugue in D minor** Gerhard Weinberger *org* **CPO**
- **Eight Geistliche Gesänge Nos 1-4** Berlin Radio Choir / Dietrich Knothe **Berlin Classics**
- **Lieder** Iris Vermillion *mez* Peter Stamm *pf* **CPO**



The playlists for this feature were compiled in conjunction with

Qobuz, the music streaming service. You can listen at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Live music-making and reviews of online concerts, including Rattle's *Tristan und Isolde*, a new production of Philippe Boesmans' *Reigen* and the Royal Concertgebouw's App

Konzerthuset Gothenburg, online

Beethoven and Schumann, from June 26

David Zinman returned to the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in March after a gap of 30 years and brought with him the hugely talented (and Decca-signed) pianist Behzod Abduraimov. Together they performed Beethoven's first composed piano concerto, No 2. Then Zinman conducted Schumann's powerful Second Symphony, a work he has a particular affection for. The concert will be available to view at GSOpay, the orchestra's digital concert archive, from June 26

gsopay.se

Crail Church, Crail & BBC Radio 3

Pavel Haas Quartet and Christian Zacharias at East Neuk Festival, July 2

This year's East Neuk Festival features a celebration of the music of Schumann from pianist Christian Zacharias, ranged over the course of several concerts, with this one seeing him collaborate with the Pavel Haas Quartet for the Piano Quintet. Also on the programme are Chopin Mazurkas and Dvořák's *American Quartet*. The concert is being recorded by BBC Radio 3 for broadcast later during the summer months.

eastneukfestival.com, bbc.co.uk/radio3

Cheltenham venues & BBC Radio 3

Cheltenham Music Festival: Satie day, July 6

The festival is marking the 150th anniversary of Erik Satie's birth this year, and Saturday July 6 sees two key events. First up, in the Pittville Pump Room lunchtime slot, are pianists Pascal and Ami Rogé with a 'Satie and Friends' programme: major works by Satie, placed alongside those of his friends Ravel and Debussy, plus others from the group of young composers he championed, including Milhaud and Tailleferre. Then, the Parabola Arts Centre is the setting for an evening performance of the show devised and written by the festival's Artistic Director Meurig Bowen, 'Erik Satie: Memoirs Of A Pear-Shaped Life'. Half monologue and half piano recital, pianist Anne Lovett showcases the range of Satie's piano output, interwoven with monologues from actor David Bamber who plays an aging Satie reminiscing over his life.

cheltenhamfestivals.com/music, bbc.co.uk/radio3

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ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Simon Rattle conducts *Tristan und Isolde* in concert in Berlin's Philharmonie

Wagner

Fresh from Mariusz Trelński's new production at the Baden-Baden Easter Festival, this *Tristan und Isolde* is a welcome addition to the Berliner Philharmoniker's Digital Concert Hall. From the lengthy accompanying interview, Sir Simon Rattle clearly adores this score and the luxuriant orchestral sound provides a rich backdrop for terrific vocal performances. Clips from Trelński's staging might make you wish we had that rather than a concert performance. Having said that, it's great to have a concert where singers are inside their roles, not tied to scores or music stands.

The Baden-Baden performances marked Stuart Skelton's keenly anticipated first *Tristan*, a role he has since undertaken for English National Opera. He will perform it again (with Rattle, in Trelński's staging) to open the Metropolitan Opera's 2016-17 season. At times, it feels as if he is husbanding his resources through this most treacherous role, but he sings valiantly. Eva-Maria Westbroek is pushed by the vocal demands of *Isolde*, but she is such a convincing actor I'd forgive her most things. The Act 2 duet with Skelton, 'O sink hernieder, Nacht der Liebe', is fabulous and she

their 50th anniversary this year, and this concert will be one of the highlights. Tying in with the festival's own Young Musicians Series, the evening will feature a selection of musicians from the BBC's New Generation Artists programme: the Armenian cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan, the Russian pianist Pavel Kolesnikov and the Belgian clarinetist Annelien Van Wauwe. The event will be recorded live, with individual performances then broadcast on BBC Radio 3 throughout the year.

harrogateinternationalfestivals.com/music-events, bbc.co.uk/radio3

Wigmore Hall & BBC Radio 3

Beethoven and Mozart on period instruments, July 11

The Wigmore's weekly Monday lunchtime



delivers a beautiful *Liebestod*. With a majestic Brangäne from Sarah Connolly and a sonorous King Marke from Stephen Milling, Rattle has assembled a mighty cast.

Presentation is simple, but effective. There are copious shots of the orchestra, the director never allowing us to miss a motif, double basses sawing away at the arrival of King Marke. German and English subtitles are helpfully displayed either side of the screen.

Mark Pullinger

Available via various subscription packages, from seven days (€9.90) to 12 months (€149), at digitalconcerthall.com

concert, broadcast on BBC Radio 3, is always worth a listen. However, this particular date looks both particularly tempting and also slightly more off-piste than usual. Period-instrument Ensemble Marsyas (who record for Linn Records) is devoted to exploring and championing the virtuoso wind music of the Baroque and Classical eras, and in this lunchtime concert they present Mozart's Quintet in E flat major for piano and winds, K452, along with Beethoven's Piano Quartet in E flat, Op 16, for the same forces joined by Kristian Bezuidenhout on the fortepiano.

wigmore-hall.org.uk, bbc.co.uk/radio3

Glyndebourne, online & UK cinemas nationwide

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg, July 12

David McVicar's popular production of

Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* is back at Glyndebourne this year, conducted by Michael Güttler and with Gerald Finley as Hans Sachs. However, if you don't have tickets then all is not lost; the 2011 production, which also starred Finley as Sachs, with Vladimir Jurowski conducting, is being shown in cinemas across the UK on July 12, and on the Glyndebourne website from 6.50pm that evening. (Alternatively, you can watch the production in your own time at the Digital Theatre – you can rent it for 48 hours for £3.99, buy it for £8.99 or buy it in HD for £10.99.)

glyndebourne.com, digitaltheatre.com

Royal Albert Hall, BBC Radio 3 and BBC Four Choir of King's College Cambridge at the Proms, 17 July

The BBC Proms open on July 15, Sakari Oramo conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra with Sol Gabetta in Elgar's Cello Concerto, followed by Prokofiev's cantata, *Alexander Nevsky*, with the great Russian mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina, the BBC National Symphony Chorus and the BBC National Chorus of Wales. However, we also want to draw your attention to the Sunday evening Prom that weekend, in which Stephen Cleobury and the Choir of King's College Cambridge join forces with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment for Haydn's *Mass in Time of War* alongside Fauré choral works including his Requiem. The

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Based on Schnitzler's *La Ronde*, Boesmans' opera is revived in Cologne

Boesmans

Philippe Boesmans' opera based on Schnitzler's play *La Ronde* premiered in 1993 but has the aura of a far older work. Its procession of 10 sexual encounters between men and women – each retaining one character from its predecessor – has something of the narrative tread of *Lulu* but without the feeling of an individual's desperate decline. Schnitzler's actress becomes an opera singer in slightly self-regarding shades of *Tosca* and *The Makropoulos Case*. Perhaps the lack of a consistent character to examine and invest in (for both composer and audience) is the work's theatrical Achilles heel.

Otherwise, it's musically very satisfying – a rich, real-deal opera score wracked with sexual tension and bursting with lyricism (there are a handful of passing references to *Lulu*, too). Boesmans' orchestral depictions of intercourse are by turns sublime and hilarious, and their theatrical potential is cleverly realised by director Nicola Hümpel. Her production



is straightforward but detailed; responding best for her dramatically is Matthias Klink's glum, pathetic Poet while delivering the best singing for Sylvain Cambreling is Lauryna Bendziunaite's rich, flexible but always clear-voiced Whore. Also clear throughout, irritatingly, is the voice of the prompter. But can one really complain when such an interesting and absorbing show is offered-up for all to view for free?

Andrew Mellor

Available to view, free of charge, until October 31, 2017, at theoperaplattform.eu

tempting line-up of soloists features soprano Lucy Crowe, mezzo Paula Murrihy, tenor Robin Tritschler and baritone – and recently

voted singer of the year by the Royal Philharmonic Society – Roderick Williams. bbc.co.uk/proms

ONLINE APP REVIEW

The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra App presents classical music in a truly multimedia environment

'The Fate of a Symphony'

When the new century dawned, the record industry found itself in a very different landscape to the one it had occupied for at least the second half of the 20th century: the difference between 'majors' and 'indies' had narrowed and the driving ethos for many of the major orchestras was 'do it yourself'. The LSO, LPO, San Francisco SO, St Louis Symphony, Seattle SO and many others went down the 'own-label' route. The Berlin Philharmonic, drawing on its heritage of performing in front of the cameras (the Karajan legacy), launched its Digital Concert Hall. Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw, one of the most distinguished of the European ensembles, perhaps looked to the long Dutch tradition of publishing and came up with a fascinating hybrid: a kind of digital magazine that contains video performances, interviews, documentaries and educational features.

Now up to Edition 17, the RCOA App's latest offering, 'The Fate of a Symphony', contains a performance of Beethoven's



Fifth Symphony recorded in 2013 under the baton of Iván Fischer who also provides a commentary in what's styled an 'enriched work'. There is also a bar-by-bar analysis by Aad van der Ven and the opportunity to follow the score. There are complete video performances of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony (Fischer again from 2014), the Brahms Double Concerto (Liviú Prunaru; Gregor Horsch; Andris Nelsons from 2014) and Mahler's Sixth Symphony (Lorin Maazel from 2010).

Iván Fischer's Beethoven – previously revealed on disc in the company of his own Budapest Festival Orchestra – is very much the mirror of the man: intense, serious yet

capable of sudden moments of humour, collegial and inclusive yet always totally in control. His commentary for the Beethoven Fifth (he watches a video and talks) is spare yet always relevant and revealing. The bar-by-bar analysis explores the themes, counter-themes and motifs.

It's interesting to compare the podium styles of the three conductors here – Maazel is economical and clearly a master of the focused rehearsal, Nelsons a wonderfully warm and friendly presence who draws some glorious music-making from the orchestra and its two soloists (drawn from the orchestra) in the Brahms Double Concerto. The RCOA App works very well on an iPad: the picture quality is excellent as is the sound, and each edition in this series is not only thought-provoking but also wonderfully satisfying. Of course any opportunity to visit the magnificent Concertgebouw – cyber or 'in the flesh' – is to be jumped at.

James Jolly

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THIS MONTH a celebratory amplifier from Italy, miniature active speakers and a new way of looking at your computer music
Andrew Everard
Audio Editor

JULY TEST DISCS



A fine Mozart recording by Trevor Pinnock and the RAM Soloists is made all the more compelling by a crisp, clean hi-res recording from Linn



A remarkable performance, and demonstration-quality sound throughout, in the 96KHz/24-bit version of Barenboim's recording of Elgar's First on Decca

All kinds of add-ons – and more

This month's crop of audio arrivals includes a range of devices to make more of your listening



Those of us who have spent time researching how to bring a particular capability to our systems will know how gratifying it is when a device pops up that can do just what we want. And that's a theme of the new products launched this month, which encompass all kinds of add-ons – and more.

For example, the Audioquest DragonFly, the USB DAC/headphone amplifier **1**, not much larger than a memory device, is now four years old; and, having launched a much more affordable version some time back in the form of the £129 DragonFly 1.2, the company now has two new models in the family. The DragonFly Black and DragonFly Red, at £89 and £169 respectively, share the same 'USB stick' design complete with a prominent image of the eponymous insect, and are now designed to work not only with computers but also with iOS and Android smartphones and tablets. They connect to Apple devices using the optional Camera Adaptor, which provides a USB output, and to Android handhelds using an Android OTG (On The Go) adaptor or Audioquest's own DragonTail adaptor, which is a £15 option. Both models use versions of the 32-bit digital-to-analogue converter from ESS: the Black version uses the ESS 9010, which delivers an output of 1.2V via an analogue volume control, and should be more than sufficient for headphones of moderate sensitivity. Meanwhile, the Red uses the

ESS 9016, which delivers a 2.1V output and is thus better suited for power-hungry headphones. It uses a bit-perfect digital volume control. The DragonFlies can also be used to feed an audio system via their 3.5mm output socket and are software-upgradable using free applications available for both Windows and iOS computers.

Also available as an interface between computer and audio devices is the latest version of Arcam's irDAC **2**. The irDAC sells for £499 and also now uses the ESS 9016 Sabre digital-to-analogue converter, as well as adding a new Bluetooth aptX wireless input, internal circuit upgrades and a built-in headphone amplifier. It has four conventional digital inputs (two optical and two coaxial) as well as an asynchronous USB for computer connection, and can handle files at up to 192kHz/24bit and DSD128. Both fixed and variable analogue output are possible, meaning it can be used into a conventional amplifier or straight into a power amp or active speakers, and it comes complete with a remote handset.

A budget alternative is the little BTA Bluetooth Audio Receiver from Lindy **3**, which sells for £23 direct from lindy.co.uk. Battery-powered and with a 10-hour life between charges, it features NFC one-touch pairing with suitable devices and comes complete with an audio cable to connect to audio systems or powered speakers.

Rather more ambitious are the two new Yamaha Music Cast components, the WXA-50 and WXC-50 **4**, due in the shops in August at prices expected to be £400 and £300 respectively. Both the WXC-50 pre-amplifier and the WXA-50 integrated amplifier have wireless and wired Ethernet connectivity and optical, coaxial, USB and analogue inputs, and can stream music from network storage as well as internet radio and services such as Spotify. Along with both Bluetooth and Apple Airplay wireless capability, they can also connect with other Yamaha Music Cast components, as well as being controlled by the company's Music Cast App on smartphones and tablets. Both models use the ESS 9006 Sabre DAC and, whereas the WXA-50 has built-in amplification, delivering 65W per channel into 8 ohms, the WXC offers variable line-level output for connection to external amplification.

Finally this month, a neat all-in-one system with both network/internet streaming capability and USB input for a computer, as well as a DAB/FM radio tuner and a slot-loading CD player. The TEAC CR-H101DAB **5** is now on sale at £400. It also offers up-conversion of all formats to 192kHz, has a digital HR loudness circuit for use when playing at low levels and delivers 20Wpc – more than adequate for the kind of small speakers with which it's likely to be used. **6**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Audio Analogue Puccini Anniversary

The Italian manufacturer has long done things its own way, launching its simple Puccini amplifier when the rivals were feature-laden. Two decades on, can the Anniversary compete?

As a reminder of how long one has been involved with hi-fi, 'anniversary' models have a habit of giving something of a jolt. When such an arrival serves as a reminder of the launch of the original and the interest it created – well, at least that helps prove that the old grey cells are still firing and that one was paying attention at the time!

Such is the case with this Anniversary version of Italian manufacturer Audio Analogue's Puccini amplifier. Selling for £2999, which is rather more than the original cost 20 years ago, it nevertheless still has the kind of simplicity the company had on its side at a time when many manufacturers still seemed intent on cramming as many controls as possible on to the front of their products.

At the time of its launch, the original Puccini stood apart from the crowd with its simple arrangement of just two controls – an input selector and a volume knob – on a plain slab of a fascia, and its relatively modest 40W-per-channel output. What it did have, however, was pricing to challenge the midrange amps from the more conventional rivals, a decent phono stage and excellent sound quality, even though it didn't quite conform to the smooth, lush presentation some expected given its Italian heritage – and, of course, its classically inspired name.

Instead, the sound was clean and informative, and seemingly impossible to push into anything approaching roughness or excessive treble enthusiasm, making

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI ANNIVERSARY



Type Integrated amplifier

Price £2999

Inputs Five line (four on RCA phonos, one on balanced XLRs)

Outputs One pair of speakers

Power 80Wpc into 8 ohms, 300W into 2 ohms

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Finishes Black or silver

Dimensions (WxHxD) 44.5x12x390cm

audioanalogue.com; decentaudio.co.uk

it a fine antidote to some of the bright-sounding CD players and lightweight speakers of the time. The Puccini also played a major part in opening up the world of Italian-made hi-fi to a wider customer base – not to mention giving its manufacturer a firm foothold in the market. Based in the spa town of Monsummano Terme, Tuscany, the company was founded the same year the original Puccini appeared, with the twin aims of hand-building its products in Italy and designing 'by ear', its 'mission statement' saying that 'what primarily interests us is to get the "high musicality", and then listening pleasure over time'.

Twenty years on, the products are still made in Italy and those central design ideas still obtain. Indeed, the Puccini Anniversary is, at first glance, an even simpler amplifier than the model it celebrates: it has just one central control and is line-only, with no phono stage. However, as the price suggests, this is a rather more ambitious design, with the output to match: it claims 80Wpc into 8 ohms – even more powerful than the Settanta version of a few years back – and that figure rises to 300W into 2 ohms, promising solid ability when it comes to driving tricky speaker loads.

The dual-mono design manages that impressive power by using three pairs of

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Anniversary is a very traditional amplifier, so here are some conventional partners for it

MARANTZ SA8005

An excellent CD player, with a twist: the Marantz SA8005 also doubles as a USB DAC for a computer



KEF REFERENCE ONE

SPEAKERS Compact but exceptionally powerful-sounding, the KEF Reference One speakers will work well with the Audio Analogue



output transistors for each channel, while a look at the rear panel makes obvious the 'mirror image' layout within, with the two channels placed either side of a centrally mounted toroidal transformer. Rather than the input sockets – which extend to four sets of phonos and one of XLRs – being in pairs, as they are on most other amplifiers, those for the left and right channels are physically separated, and again laid out in mirror image.

Fed with a range of files from MP3 all the way up to DSD, the Anniversary shows a very mature confidence and control that's hard not to like

Another notable aspect of the design is that single main control, which belies some complexity within: it manages to control not just volume but also power on/off and input selection. A short push powers the amp up, while a five second push powers it down and a three-second push changes input – and, of course, turning the control alters the volume.

However, even that 'of course' isn't as simple as it sounds: using a total of four potentiometers – two per channel – means the volume control can offer a choice of 'response curves' to compensate for the characteristics of the speakers to which the amplifier is connected. So if you have very sensitive speakers, you can dial in a slower response in the lower reaches of the volume control's travel or, for low-sensitivity speakers, it's possible to set a volume curve with a smarter 'step off' from zero, becoming more progressive at higher settings.

PERFORMANCE

I have to say I found that single control rather confusing at first, finding myself turning the amplifier off when I wanted to change input, and having to work hard to hear the differences between the various volume curves. Fortunately the Anniversary comes with a rather more conventional system remote handset, even though the fact it illuminates when you pick it up did surprise me at first.

No such nasty shocks are available when one listens to the amplifier, however: rather, the new model has all the qualities I have admired in Audio Analogue's products in the past but on a rather grander scale, thanks to that extra (rather large) dose of power and a topology clearly designed for extra clarity and finesse. In other words, it sounds smooth and sweet, with excellent scale and substance to the music, but doesn't stint on dynamic ability or presence and ambience.

The result is a highly attractive sound across a wide range of recordings, from the most intimate solo instrumental recordings to larger orchestral and choral works. Fed with a range of files from MP3 all the way up to DSD via a top-notch network music player, and powering large floorstanding speakers, the Anniversary shows a very mature confidence and control that's hard not to like, and is as rewarding whether you want to listen into the depths of a recording or simply sit back and relax.

The effortlessness of the presentation is the most beguiling aspect of this amplifier. Even when playing large-scale, complex works at relatively high levels, there's never any sense of its having to work hard, and clarity is maintained however hard you push things. With a recording such as the recent Elgar First Symphony from Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Berlin (Decca, 5/16), the amplifier does extremely well with both the great sweep of the work and the finer details of the various sections of the orchestra, pulling off that great trick of making it all seem so simple while at same time really bringing out the nuances. Similarly, with Ingrid Fliter's reading of Schumann and Mendelssohn piano concertos (Linn, 5/16), while the Anniversary may be a little warm and over-sonorous in the lower octaves of the piano, there's no denying the clarity of the balance between soloist and orchestra, and the way the speed of the amplifier makes every note clear and fluid, even when heard against the rest of the musical forces.

Yes, the Audio Analogue Puccini Anniversary looks very unlike most of its rivals, even at this high-flying price, but the pay-off is a sound of warmth and grace likely to appeal to many listeners. **G**

Or you could try...

The Audio Analogue amplifier is in a relatively rarefied sector of the market: by the time you get to this level, many buyers will be considering a two-box pre-amplifier/power amplifier combination. However, there are some integrated amplifier alternatives worth considering.

Marantz PM14S1 Special Edition

For example, rather less than the price of the Anniversary will buy you the excellent Marantz PM14S1 Special Edition integrated amp (£1799), launched last year with a fine combination of the company's usual finesse and clarity, plus the power to drive even demanding speakers. More information at marantz.co.uk



The Naim Supernait 2

The £3050 Naim Supernait 2 follows the same 'no frills' thinking, having lost the digital section of the original Supernait, and displays the usual Naim trait of a relatively low power output on paper but the drive and grip to make a wide range of speakers sing. It can also be upgraded with the addition of a power supply, as you can discover at naimaudio.com.



Arcam A49

If you want power to match and go beyond the Italian amp, the £3995 Arcam A49 has it, and in spades. A big, heavyweight amplifier, designed in the UK but built in the US, it uses its Class G amplification to combine fine detail with massive slam and drive. See arcam.co.uk.



Leema Elements duo

Finally, if you want to go the two-box route, don't overlook the £2590 Leema Elements duo (reviewed last month), which combines a high-resolution DAC/pre-amp with a stereo power amp reconfigurable as a much more powerful mono device, for future upgrading. Details at leema-acoustics.com.



● **REVIEW AVI DM5**

Little speakers that do a lot

Compact British-made active speakers keep it simple – to impressive effect

As company reinventions go, AVI's is pretty impressive. Older readers may remember it as a supplier of high-quality, meticulously built hi-fi separates, from amplification through to source components such as CD players and tuners, all designed and assembled in the UK. From its foundation in 1989, that was the company's business for the better part of two decades, with the range being joined in 1999 by the celebrated and highly successful Neutron loudspeakers. Then, in 2006, everything changed for AVI. The company stopped making its hi-fi separates, declaring them to be 'legacy' products, and turned all its efforts to making active loudspeakers, launching with the ADM9, which was reviewed favourably in its revised '9.1' form in *Gramophone* in August 2010.

What's an active speaker? New readers start here. Whereas a conventional – or, as AVI would have it, 'legacy' – hi-fi system commonly uses an amplifier sending a full-range signal down cables to speakers, inside which it is split by a passive crossover network to provide suitable signals for the various drive units, in an active speaker the crossover is a powered network, dividing the signal for the drivers and then passing it on to internal amplifiers dedicated to each driver. It's not a new idea, and wasn't even so back in 2006: you have to go back to the 1970s to find the first speakers using this design, and of course hi-fi companies such as Bang & Olufsen, Linn, Meridian and Naim have all offered active speaker designs either as standard or as an option over the years.

Unlike some less expensive 'powered' speakers, which have internal amplifiers but use a conventional passive crossover between the amp and the drive units, the AVI ADM5 is a true active design, with each speaker having both a crossover and two channels of amplification. It's also a somewhat simpler design than previous AVI models, each speaker having no more than a signal input (on an RCA phono socket) and an IEC-type mains input. That means they need to be used with a source having its own volume control, AVI suggesting the likes of the Apple iPhone or – if you want to connect multiple sources – some kind of pre-amplifier with input switching and volume control.

The speakers use cabinets made from 12mm MDF and are smartly finished in real wood veneers: the review pair came in

**AVI DM5****Type** Active loudspeakers**Price** £700/pr**Drive units** Silk dome tweeter, 13cm doped paper cone mid/bass driver**Amplification** 2x50W Class D in each unit**Enclosure** Rear-ported, various real wood finishes (see text)**Inputs** One analogue audio and IEC mains on each speaker**Dimensions** (HxWxD) 27x15x22cm**avihifi.co.uk**

For small speakers they have excellent punch and definition, and instrumental timbres are rendered impressively

white ash but cherry, black ash, light oak and walnut are also available, along with rosewood at a £75 premium – although, given the small-scale production, finish availability can vary. They use a silk dome tweeter and a 13cm paper cone mid/bass unit, each driven by its own 50W Class D amplifier, with input monitoring to avoid clipping of the built-in amps and input-sensing automatic standby to save energy if no signal is detected for 30 minutes.

PERFORMANCE

To use these little speakers, which are truly compact at just 27cm tall, I had to do some system rethinking. In the end I used them with the little Gramofon streaming box, and with the Korg DS-DAC-10R I reviewed in the May issue connected to my MacMini 'music computer'. Both devices have their own volume control, and connections throughout were via inexpensive phono cables I bought online for the purpose:

straight RCA-to-RCA cables for the Korg and a 3.5mm-stereo-to-two-RCA's cable for the Gramofon.

What was immediately clear is that these are pretty good speakers for desktop use. They're small enough to use either side of a monitor, with a footprint just 15x22cm, and with a little upward tilt to avoid excessive bass reinforcement from the desk surface (I used the foam wedges on which my Neat Iotas normally sit) are capable of a highly coherent and dramatic sound, especially when a rear wall is relatively close to help the rear-venting port do its stuff.

For speakers so small they have excellent punch and definition, meaning that large-scale orchestral pieces have good dynamics and scale, while at the same time instrumental timbres are rendered impressively. Using the Korg as the source, and comparing CD-quality and DSD files, it's even possible to hear the gains in clarity and that sense of space the higher-resolution files bring. Yes, the bass extension is limited by absolute standards but it is still impressive for speakers so small, and the fact that the low end is tight and clean means it covers its tracks admirably. Even with the rich, resonant tone of Steven Isserlis's cello on his reading of the Elgar Concerto (Hyperion, 3/16), the crisp, clean sound of the AVI speakers delivers a thrilling insight.

Switch the speakers over to use on stands in a larger space and it becomes clear that, while they can undoubtedly go loud enough to fill modest spaces without any signs of stress, it's hard to argue with the laws of physics, and they do sound a little lightweight when trying to drive large volumes of air. Play large-scale orchestral music and they can be found wanting when it comes to delivering the sheer impact of massed forces – but then one does have to keep reminding oneself that these are truly tiny speakers, and what they are doing is still impressive for their size.

And, of course, if they're too small for your needs, AVI can also offer its larger DM10 speakers, the spiritual successors to the ADM9.1 model previously reviewed, and complete with multiple inputs, remote control and digital-to-analogue conversion. For 'main room' use those may be preferable; for close-up listening the DM5s are undoubtedly an intriguing alternative to a conventional 'amp and speakers' set-up. **G**

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● ESSAY

A Roon with a view of all your music

There's a confusing array of music sources out there, and juggling them can be tricky. Roon attempts to pull them all together

Without a doubt the music landscape is changing. These days a library is as likely to be stored on a computer hard drive as a bank of shelves, and as files rather than discs of any dimension. As if that weren't enough, there's also a burgeoning line-up

of music streaming services, offering almost limitless access to massive collections of works at the click of a mouse or a tap of a screen, not to mention the tens of thousands of internet radio stations with their diverse range of musical styles (and more) available from around the world.

There's only one drawback in all this, and it's not the obvious one of connecting your computer to your audio system to take advantage of these new options – that's the (relatively) easy part, with a range of solutions available. No, the major annoyance is that each of these ways of accessing music has its own interface or application, meaning that one could easily find oneself juggling four or five pieces of software in order to access all the playback options on offer. Yes, some audio equipment has a range of services enabled, such as Spotify, Tidal and internet radio, but while manufacturers are keen to add more, to give their customers as simple an experience as possible, many will tell you that what looks like the simple task of adding a service can soon turn into a minefield of licensing, plus software and even hardware alterations. Choose what looks like the simpler route of connecting a computer through a digital-to-analogue converter to an audio system and it's just as bad: as I look at the screen of this computer I can see three different interfaces for streaming services, plus even more for playing various kinds of files stored on my network.

The idea behind Roon, a recently launched music player program, is to bring together all of those requirements in one application, meaning one's own music library, stored on the home network, and streaming services all work together seamlessly, and with a user-friendly interface way beyond the list-type display of everything from iTunes to specialised



Roon's way with metadata can even fill in the gaps for you

audio player software. The roots of Roon lie in Sooloos, the company founded over a decade ago to improve the handling of digital music files and later acquired by British audio company Meridian Audio for integration into its own digital music systems. Some of the original Sooloos team moved to Meridian with the brand, and last year the technology was spun off from the parent company as Roon Labs, with the first version of the new software – Roon v1.0 – becoming available in May 2015.

Now on version 1.2, Roon is available for either Mac OSX or Windows, with remote apps available for iOS and Android. While Roon Labs still works closely with

Roon is by far the most attractive computer interface I have yet found for music playback

Meridian, it also has a growing number of connections with hardware manufacturers including Bowers & Wilkins, Bryston, dCS, Linn, Naim, Oppo, PS Audio and TEAC. Some of these have built Roon's technology into their products; others have models Roon has tested and deemed to be compatible with its systems.

Roon is an application installed on to a computer on your network – the company suggests it might be most convenient to put it on an old machine stored away somewhere and left switched on – which can then be accessed by all the devices connected to that network. I've put it on my 'music' MacMini, which is permanently connected to my hi-fi system, and Roon accesses both the music stored on its internal hard drive and that on my main NAS music library, making it available to every other location on the

network. From any of these devices I can thus access my own music, my Tidal account and internet radio, and play it out to any of the audio devices on the network, from the computer connected to my desktop audio system to my main hi-fi or even the network player in the kitchen. And when music is playing,

Roon offers the ability to group players to deliver music in several areas of the house or to use its 'transfer zone' to switch where the music is playing.

Roon will handle music from MP3 all the way up to 384kHz/24-bit and DSD, and will convert on the fly to suit the capabilities of the device to which it's playing. But there's more to it than that. Using the metadata stored with files and adding other information from its own servers, Roon not only presents an informative graphical interface, drawing in suggestions from your own library or Tidal to complement what's currently playing, but it can also offer a 'radio' facility, automatically playing suitable music when your chosen selections finish. It will even cover your tracks if you have poorly tagged music stored on your computer or NAS, looking up metadata to fill in the blanks. Even with my own rather large music library, running to almost 8000 albums and some 125,000 tracks, after some hours of background 'chugging' Roon populated all the information, and with an almost uncanny degree of accuracy. Add in advanced playlisting, the ability to 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down' selections the program makes for you and much more, and this is by far the most attractive computer interface I have yet found for music playback.

Of course, there is a cost. Accustomed though we may be to 'free music' these days, Roon is a paid-for service, not least due to all that metadata it processes and delivers, with a one-year subscription at \$119 or lifetime service at \$449 from **roonlabs.com**. A two-week free trial, which should be enough to decide whether or not it's for you, is available. I have an inkling many will find it not only compulsive but also highly entertaining. **G**

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NOTES & LETTERS

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The original Gambler

In reading the article on Gennady Rozhdestvensky (Replay, April, page 80), I was puzzled by the statement crediting him with 'giving the first complete performances of Prokofiev's *The Gambler* at the Bolshoi in 2000-01,' since I attended a complete performance of this opera at the Bolshoi in the autumn of 1974, one of a good many that were on the schedule that season. Then I realized that the reference here is not to *The Gambler* per se but rather to its little-known original version. Prokofiev completed that version in 1917, but because of the revolutionary turmoil that soon engulfed Russia and the composer's emigration, it was not performed. By the time the premiere took place, in 1929 – and not in Russia but in Brussels – Prokofiev had thoroughly revised the work. In addition to differences in the libretto, expanded in the revision, and in orchestration, the original is even more declamatory in style and the revision free-flowing and almost mellifluous by comparison.

A live recording of one of Rozhdestvensky's Bolshoi performances of the original version was released in Japan on the Exton label.

Daniel Morrison
Congers, NY, USA

Pilgrim's Progress

It was good to see the 1972 EMI recording of Vaughan Williams's *The Pilgrim's Progress* discussed in Classics Reconsidered (May, page 98). In his opening paragraph, David Gutman asks whether this could be a problem piece and refers to both the Richard Hickox's 'frugal' performances of this work and the doubts left by the ENO 2012 'show', the first professional staging in London since the Covent Garden production for the Festival of Britain in 1951.

I attended both the 2008 Hickox performance at Sadler's Wells and that of the ENO in 2012. Knowing of RVW's concern to get the staging and the costumes right, and how upset he was when the Covent Garden production failed in that regard, I felt disgusted by the ENO performance which purported to bring it up to date by setting it in a suggestion of Alcatraz. I considered it to be a travesty of what the composer

Letter of the Month

Nikolaus Harnoncourt remembered

Artists who worked with Nikolaus Harnoncourt invariably spoke about the great privilege of making music with this extraordinary person and being able to profit from his erudition, his insight and his enthusiasm.

Audiences in Austria didn't just respect and love him, they adored him. I was lucky enough to attend quite a few of his concerts both in Vienna and in Graz. Each of them was a special event – there was never a disappointing evening.

As I go through the concert programmes of the past few years – Bach's *St John Passion* and his Mass in B minor, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and *Creation*, Mozart's *Great Mass*, Dvořák's *Stabat mater*, Mozart's last three symphonies, Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* – I can envisage this very slight and frail-looking man in black come on to the stage, often saying a few words of explanation and instruction to the audience, always seasoned with his wry humour. And then the concert would begin and you



Nikolaus Harnoncourt: total commitment

couldn't believe the immense energy and the total commitment with which he transmitted the music to us.

I never came away from a Harnoncourt concert without feeling uplifted, enriched – and grateful, as well as hopeful that we should be granted another season, another concert with Nikolaus Harnoncourt and his forces – the Concentus Musicus Wien and the Arnold Schoenberg Choir.

Aino Bonačić Slivnik
Ljubljana, Slovenia

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intended and perhaps this was why it left more doubts than the splendid Hickox 2008 semi-staged (not 'frugal') period-setting performance with Roderick Williams as Pilgrim, about which David Gutman expressed the regret that there is no live recording. I can say that the audience in Sadler's Wells appeared to be visibly moved at the final curtain. I did not sense that at the Coliseum.

David Greening
King's Lynn, Norfolk

Koussevitzky's Copland

Reading your review of a 1946 concert of Aaron Copland's music by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by

Serge Koussevitzky (Replay, May, page 95) brought back memories of the same forces in an RCA Victor 78rpm album of Copland's *El Salón México*. Nearing the end of the piece there was a short solo on the piccolo clarinet played with so much rubato that it sounded as if the player was inebriated. This seemed appropriate to describe a customer at *El Salón México*. It charmed me so much that I never forgot it and I found that, as a result of the review mentioned, that I could rehear it on YouTube. I do not claim to have listened to every recording of *El Salón México* ever made, but I have never heard any other performance by an orchestra where the solo is played in that way,

and that includes a recording by the composer himself conducting the New Philharmonia Orchestra. Now, every time I hear a recording of the piece, I wait expectantly for that part, hoping it is played as in the 1938 Boston recording – but, alas, it is always played straight.

Frank Boardman
Athens, GA, USA

A modern approach to the LP

Your correspondents (Letters, June, page 124) seem unimpressed by the return of the LP. I concur that listening through crackling and popping sounds undermines the enjoyment of quiet and subtle music. But you can have the best of both worlds – the silent background of

digital reproduction *and* the warmth of analogue sound. Simply hook up a laptop to your amplifier and use real-time click/pop elimination software. It is as easy as connecting and monitoring a sound recorder.

The surface noise disappears and all but the loudest clicks are removed, with only marginal loss of quality. I am now enjoying LPs I once considered unplayable, as well as nearly a thousand bought in charity shops and at jumble sales. I enjoy rarities long unavailable and can take a chance on music unknown to me – all for 50p an LP, or less.

Michael Lloyd
Dunbar

OBITUARIES

An influential harpsichordist and a pioneering Decca engineer

HUGUETTE DREYFUS

Harpsichordist
Born November 30, 1928
Died May 17, 2016



One of the leading figures in the revival of the harpsichord in France, and a major player in the post-war historically-informed

performance practice movement, Huguette Dreyfus has died aged 87. She studied the piano in Paris, with both Lazare Lévy and Norbert Dufourcq at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique. She later worked with Ruggero Gerlin, a Landowska pupil, at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena and won the First Medal at the International Harpsichord Competition in Geneva in 1958.

During the 1960s she focused on keyboard repertoire from the Renaissance to the Baroque, working with many different figures in the burgeoning early-music movement.

From 1967 she taught at the Schola Cantorum and Sorbonne in Paris, and at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Lyon. Her pupils included Christophe Rousset, Jory Vinikour, Olivier Beaumont, Yannick Le Gaillard and Noëlle Spieth.

Dreyfus recorded extensively, including for Archiv Produktion, Erato and Denon (a number of her Denon Bach recordings were reissued recently by Heritage Recordings).

JAMES BROWN

Decca engineer
Born January 14, 1920
Died April 25, 2016



James Brown joined Decca in the late 1940s, working at the old Decca Studios at Broadhurst Gardens, West Hampstead. He

worked with Roy Wallace on the design and construction of Decca's earliest stereo equipment in 1953 and early 1954. The two went to Geneva in May 1954 to record Rimsky-Korsakov's *Antar* with Ansermet and the Suisse Romande Orchestra (Decca's first stereo recording).

They later travelled to Rome where they recorded *Otello*, *La traviata* and *Manon Lescaut* with Tebaldi and Del Monaco. Brown was solely responsible for the stereo versions of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (Erich Kleiber), *Don Giovanni* (Krips) and *Così fan tutte* plus *Die Zauberflöte* (Böhm) in June-July 1955 produced by Victor Olof and Peter Andry. Later that same year he worked on operatic projects in Rome.

From March 1956 until his retirement in 1984 Brown worked largely in Vienna. He was responsible for the stereo version of Solti's *Das Rheingold* and then worked in tandem with Gordon Parry on all the major Viennese recordings until the mid-1970s.

In his last years prior to retirement he was responsible for the maintenance of Decca's recording equipment in Vienna.

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We invite 10 of today's leading pianists to talk in depth about 10 great piano concertos – including Pierre-Laurent Aimard on Ravel's masterpiece

Jansons explores Rachmaninov

Mariss Jansons discusses conducting the composer's Second Symphony in next month's Musician and the Score

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Which recording of this religious opera should you own? David Patrick Stearns offers his guide to available recordings – both on record and on film

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Hindemith Chbr & Voc Wks. <i>Fischer-Dieskau/Ens Varianti/Henschel, F</i> . ⑆ ② HC16014	
Mozart Pf Concs Nos 20 & 21. <i>Zhang/Heidelberg SO/Fey</i> . ⑆ HC16037	
Rachmaninov Songs. <i>Sukmanova, J & E</i> . ⑆ HC16024	
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Bach, JS Solo Cantatas Nos 35, 169 & 170. <i>Fink/Freiburg Baroque Orch/Müllejans</i> . ⑥ ③ HMG50 2016	
Bartók Miraculous Mandarin. Orch Wks. <i>Lyon Nat Orch/Robertson</i> . ⑥ ③ HMG50 1777	
Biber Rosary Sons. <i>Manze/Egarr/McGillivray</i> . ⑥ ② ③ HMG50 7321/2	
Brahms Cpte Pf Trios. <i>Trio Wanderer</i> . ⑥ ② ③ HMG50 1915/16	
Brahms. Schumann Voc Qts. <i>Petersen/Vondung/Doufexis/Güra/Jarnot/Berner/Radicke</i> . ⑥ ② ③ HMG50 8470/71	
Haydn Pf Concs. <i>Staier/Freiburg Baroque Orch/Goltz</i> . ⑥ ③ HMG50 1854	
Haydn Pf Sons. <i>Planès</i> . ⑥ ② ③ HMG50 1762/3	
Lawes Cpte Wks for Solo Lyra Viol. <i>Boothby</i> . ⑆ HMU90 7625	
Ligeti Lux aeterna. <i>Cappella Amsterdam/musikFabrik/Reuss</i> . ⑥ ③ HMG50 1985	
Rachmaninov Etudes-tableaux, Op 39. Pf Wks. <i>Melnikov</i> . ⑥ ③ HMG50 1978	
Various Cpsrs 20th-Century Vc Wks. <i>Bertrand/Amoyel</i> . ⑥ ② ③ HMG50 8466/7	
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Taverner Masses. <i>Ch of Westminster Abbey/O'Donnell</i> . ⑆ CDA68147	
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Debussy. Takemitsu Wks for Stgs. <i>Scottish Ens</i> . ⑆ CKD512	
Jenkins, J Five-Part Consorts (r2009). <i>Phantasm</i> . ⑆ ③ BKD557	
Jenkins, J Six-Part Consorts (r2009). <i>Phantasm</i> . ⑆ ③ BKD556	
Ward Consort Wks for Five & Six Vlois (r2009). <i>Phantasm</i> . ⑆ ③ BKD339	


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Tishchenko Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 3. <i>Tishchenko.</i>	ⓕ NF/PMA99115
Tishchenko Sym No 5. <i>Moscow RSO/Shostakovich, M.</i>	ⓕ NF/PMA99111
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Schubert Stg Qts D87 & 804 (r1976). <i>Italiano Qt.</i>	ⓕ Ⓢ Ⓢ PTC5186 232
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










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REVIEWS INDEX

A		Buxtehude		Crumb		Gál		Hurnik, I	
	Adès	Gott, hilf mir, BuxWV34; Jesu, meine Freude, BuxWV6  74		A Little Suite for Christmas, AD 1979 64		Piano Concerto, Op 57 33		Concerto for oboe and piano 96	
	Arcadiana 50	Sarabande and Courante (transcr Stokowski) 42		Processional 64		Geist		I	
Albéniz	Iberia – El puerto 84	Byrd		D		Die mit Tränen säen  74		Ibert	
B		And think ye nymphs 84		d'India		Dixit Dominus Domino meo  74		Chansons de Don Quichotte 84	
Bach, JS		Compel the hawk 84		Piangono al pianger mio 85		Gibbons		Ippolitov-Ivanov	
Goldberg Variations, BWV988 62		Pavane and Gigue (transcr Stokowski) 42		Debussy		Ah, dear heart 84		In the Manger (transcr Stokowski) 42	
Six French Suites, BWV812-817 62		The eagle's force 84		Dances 96		Dainty fine bird 84		J	
Toccat, 'Dorian', BWV538 71		Ye sacred Muses 84		Images – Reflets dans l'eau 68		Fair is the rose 84		Juon	
Toccat and Fugue, BWV565 71		C		Nocturnes 97		The silver swan 84		String Quartets – Op 5; Op 11; Op 29; Op 67 53	
Various works (transcr Stokowski) 42		Caccini		Trois Mélodies de Verlaine 84		Gilse		K	
Balakirev		Dispiegate guancie amate 85		Delalande/Destouches		Piano Concerto, 'Drei Tanzskizzen' 33		Kapsberger	
Piano Sonata No 2 69		Nube gentil 85		Les éléments 88		Variations on a Saint-Nicolas Song 33		Capona 85	
Bartók		Caplet		Dorumsgaard		Glass		Kapsberger 85	
Concerto for Orchestra 97		Les prières 84		Spanish Traditional Songs 84		In the Summer House 52		Katt	
Piano Sonata 97		Caron		Dufay		Mad Rush 52		Bogorodice Djevo 71	
Suite, Op 14 Sz62 68		Accueilly m'a la belle 74		Ave regina caelorum III 75		Godard		Slavkof 71	
Beethoven		Corps contre corps 74		Masses – Various 75		Symphonies – 'Symphonie gothique', Op 23; No 2, Op 57. Trois Morceaux, Op 51 34		Variations on Veni Sancte Spiritus 71	
Abendlied unterm gestirnten Himmel, WoO150 83		Hélas que pourra devenir mon cuer 74		Se la face ay pale 75		Violin Sonatas – Nos 1-4 52		Klenau	
Bagatelles, Op 33 62		Le despourveu infortuné 74		Dutilleux		Goodhart		Symphony No 9 34	
Drei Gesänge, Op 83 83		Missa Accueilly m'a la belle – Agnus Dei 74		Ainsi la nuit 50		Lady on the silver throne 83		Korndorf	
Leonore Overture No 3 97		Missa Clemens et benigna – Sanctus 74		Piano Sonata 97		Górecki		In Honour of Alfred Schnittke (AGSCH) 52	
Symphony No 2 31		Missa Jesus autem transiens – Gloria 74		Dvořák		Genesis I, Op 19 No 1 52		Körvits	
The Creatures of Prometheus – excerpts 97		Missa L'homme armé – Kyrie 74		Czech Suite 96		Gounod		Labyrinths 76	
Violin Concerto 30, 97		Missa Sanguis sanctorum – Credo 74		Overture, 'Carnival', Op 92 B169 32		Faust  88		Laul 76	
Benda, GA		Carter, E		Rusalka Fantasy (arr Honeck/Ille)  44		Granados		Reflections from a Plain 76	
Six Sinfonias 38		Piano Sonata 97		Serenade for Strings in E major 96		Goyescas 65		Seven Dreams of Seven Birds 76	
Boccherini		Cavalli		Symphony No 8 32		Oriental, Op 37 No 2 84		Körvits/Tormis	
Minuet (transcr Stokowski) 42		Operatic extracts – various 88		E		Gubaidulina		The Last Ship 76	
Boesmans, P		Chaminade		Elgar		Chaconne 97		Plainland Song 76	
La Ronde 113		Mélodies 84		Piano Quintet, Op 84 32		Introitus 97		Kurbatov	
Boulanger, L		Chaplygin		Sea Pictures, Op 37 (both orch Donald Fraser) 32		Musical Toys 97		Lost in Darkness, Op 34 69	
Clairières dans le ciel 84		Little Cyprian Music, Op 37 69		To her beneath whose steadfast star 83		Guerrero		L	
Brahms		Chopin		F		Maria Magdalene et altera Maria 76		Lawes	
Clarinet Quintet, Op 115 50		Ballades – No 1, Op 23; No 4, Op 52 63		Fabry-Garat		H		Complete Music for Solo Lyra Viol 67	
Concerto for Violin and Cello, Op 102 32		Berceuse, Op 57 63		Plainte à Hortence 83		Harvey		Leoncavallo	
Haydn Variations 96		Etudes, Op 10 – Nos 10 & 12, 'Revolutionary' 28		Falla		Come, Holy Ghost 76		Zazà 89	
Symphony No 4 32		Etudes, Op 25 68		Nights in the Gardens of Spain 96		I love the Lord 76		Leslie	
Three Piano Pieces, Op 117 68		Fantaisie, Op 49 63		Feldman		Laus Deo 76		My love is fair 83	
Britten		Nocturnes – various 63		Extensions 3 64		Magnificat and Nunc dimittis 76		Thine eyes so bright 83	
Variations on a Theme by Frank Bridge 96		Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35 – Marche funèbre (transcr Stokowski) 42		Intermission 5 64		Missa brevis 76		Liszt	
Bruce		Polonaise-fantaisie, Op 61 63		Palais de Mari 64		Praise ye the Lord 76		La campanella, S141 No 3 68	
Gumboots 50		Polonaises – Nos 1-7 64		Piano Piece 1952 64		The Annunciation 76		Piano Sonata, S178 28	
Bruckner		Preludes, Op 28 62		Förster		The royal banners forward go 76		Lobo	
Symphony No 7 (ed Haas) 30		Clarke		Confitebor tibi Domine  74		Toccat 76		Lamentations 76	
Symphony No 8 31		Trumpet Prelude (transcr Stokowski) 42		Franck		Haydn, M		Missa Maria Magdalene 76	
Bruhns		Clinio		París angelicus (transcr Stokowski) 42		Symphonies, Vol 1 39		O quam suavis est, Domine 76	
De profundis clamavi  74		Costanzi		Prélude, Fugue et Variation 97		Haydn, M, et al		Regina caeli 76	
Butler		Cello Sonatas – in B flat; in C minor; in F; in G; in G minor 51		Frescobaldi		Viola Concertos 39		M	
Dirty Beasts 50		Sonatas for Two Cellos – in C; in F 51		Toccat 85		Heroldt		Mahler	
Down-Hollow Winds 50				Froberger		Matthäuspassion 74		Symphony No 7 96	
Fall 50				Partita II, FbWV602 62		Hesketh		Matthews, D	
Lovesongs Waltzes 50				G		Horae (pro Clara)  65		Piano Quintet, Op 92 54	
Preludes inégales 50				Gail		Notte oscura  65			
Rondes d'automne 50				Bolleros 83		Three Japanese Miniatures  65			
Rumba Machine 50						Through Magic Casements  65			

Mazocchi	Pari Intervallo	71	Schulhoff	Piano Concerto No 2	97	T	Weber	Abschied vom Leben, Op 41, Heft 1, No 2	83				
Fortuna sul volto	Trivium	71	Schulz-Evler	Russian Rhapsody, Op 14	36	Tallis	Weelkes	Death hath deprived me	84				
Meister	Pauer, J	96	Schumann	Fantasia, Op 17	68	Like as the doleful dove	84	Like two proud armies	84				
Il giardino del piacere – No 1; No 3; No 7; No 8; No 9; No 12	Symphony for Strings	96	Schumann	Kreisleriana, Op 16	28	O ye tender babes	84	Mars in a fury	84				
Mendelssohn	Pearsall	83	Schumann	Phantasie, Op 131	30	When shall my sorrowful sighing slake	84	Thule, the Period of Cosmography – The Andalusian merchant	84				
Die erste Walpurgisnacht, Op 60	Great God of love	83	Scriabin	Piano Works – various	71	Taverner	Masses – Mater Christi sanctissima; Western Wynde	81	Wolf-Ferrari	I gioielli della Madonna	94		
 34	Lay a garland	83	Scriabin	Symphonies – Nos 1 & 2	 41	Mater Christi sanctissima	81	Wranitzky, A	Violin Concerto	38			
Lieder ohne Worte – various	Light of my soul	83	Shaw	Dolce cantavi	85	Tchaikovsky	Grande Sonate, Op 37	68	Wranitzky, P	Symphony in D major	38		
Overtures – Die Hebriden, Op 26; Ruy Blas, Op 95; Die schöne Melusine, Op 32	Sing we and chaunt it	83	Shostakovich	Piano Quintet, Op 57	54	Serenade for Strings in C major	96	Cello Concerto	38				
 34	Summer is y' coming in	83	Shostakovich	Prelude and Fugue, Op 87 No 3	68	Six Pieces on a Single Theme, Op 21	69						
Sechs Kinderstücke, Op 72	Piston, W	97	Shostakovich	Six Spanish Songs, Op 100	84	Solitude, Op 73 No 6 (transcr Stokowski)	42	Nicholas Angelich – ‘Dedication’	28				
Symphony No 4, ‘Italian’	Prokofiev	68	Shostakovich	United Nations March (transcr Stokowski)	42	String Quartet No 1, Op 11 – Andante cantabile (transcr Stokowski)	42	Ens Modo Antiquo – ‘The Young Vivaldi’	47				
Zwei Stücke aus dem Notenalbum für Eduard Benecke	Puccini	 92	Sollima	Il mandataro	51	Symphony No 6, ‘Pathétique’	 44	Martha Argerich – ‘Live from Lugano 2015’	56				
Messiaen	Purcell	96	Sor	De amor an las prisiones	83	The Seasons, Op 37a – Autumn Song (two versions)	68	Martha Argerich – ‘Piano Duos and Concert’	 56				
Messe de la Pentecôte – Communion; Sortie	Dido and Aeneas – Dido’s Lament (transcr Stokowski)	42	Sor	Las mujeres y cuerdas	83	The Seasons, Op 37b	68	Ars Antiqua Austria – ‘Accordato’	54				
Prière après la Communion	King Arthur – Suite	96	Sousa	Mis descuidados ojos	83	Theme and Variations, Op 19 No 6	68	Alison Balsom; Tom Poster – ‘Légende’	57				
Milhaud	R		Sousa	The Stars and Stripes Forever (transcr Stokowski)	42	Telemann	Suite, TWV32:14 (attrib Bach, BWV824)	62	BBC Philharmonic Orchestra – ‘Orchestral Transcriptions of Leopold Stokowski’	42			
Eumenides – Prelude	Ravel		Sperger, JM	Three Symphonies – in C minor; in G minor; in D major	38	Tomášek	An die Entfernte	83	Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra – ‘Stokowski Transcriptions’	42			
Mompou	Complete Orchestral Works – various	39	Sperger, JM	Dry your sweet cheek	83	Tomkins	Nähe des Geliebten	83	Allan Clayton – ‘Where’er you Walk’	95			
Variations sur un thème de Chopin	Daphnis et Chloé (arranged for piano)	97	Stainer	The castle by the sea	83	Tomkins	Schäfers Klagelied	83	Concertgebouw Orchestra – ‘Horizon 7’	 47			
Mondonville	Daphnis et Chloé Suite No 2	96	Disappointment	83	Nähe des Geliebten	83	Rastlose Liebe	83	Mélanide Corriveau – ‘Pardessus de viole’	58			
Cantate Domino	Don Quichotte à Dulcinée	84	Dry your sweet cheek	83	Schäfers Klagelied	83	Tomkins	Cloris when as I woo	84	Youri Egorov – ‘Youri Egorov’	68		
De profundis	La valse	97	Flora’s Queen	83	Music divine	84	O let me live for true love – O let me die for true love	84	See, see the shepherds’ queen	84	Claire-Marie Le Guay – ‘20th-Century Piano Music’	97	
Magnus Dominus	Miroirs	68	Like as a ship	83	O let me live for true love – O let me die for true love	84	See, see the shepherds’ queen	84	The fauns and satyrs stripping	84	Richard Harvey – ‘The Genteel Companion’	59	
Nisi Dominus	Piano Concertos – In G major; for the Left Hand	97	Stanford	Dante Rhapsodies, Op 92	41	See, see the shepherds’ queen	84	The fauns and satyrs stripping	84	Dominus illuminatio mea	 74		
Morley	String Quartet	50	Stainer	On Time	83	Tunder							
Arise, awake	Reger	79	Piano Concerto No 2, Op 126	41	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Veneziano, G	La Passione secondo Giovanni	81	Verdi	Un ballo in maschera	92	
Hard by a crystal fountain	Chorale cantatas – various	79	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Verdi	I due Foscari	 94	Viotti	Prives l’amour, WVII:4	83	
No, no, Nigella	Drei Motetten, Op 110	79	God and the universe	83	Stokowski	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Stradella	Santa Editta	80	Strauss, R	Ein Heldenleben, Op 40	42
Now is the gentle season	O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden	79	On Time	41	Stokowski	Intermezzo – Four Symphonic Interludes	42	Strauss, R	Ein Heldenleben, Op 40	42	Stravinsky	Apollon musagète	 43, 96
Moskowski	Songs – various	79	Piano Concerto No 2, Op 126	41	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stanford	Dante Rhapsodies, Op 92	41	Strozzi	Amor dormiglione	85
Piano Concerto, Op 3	Respighi	96	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stokowski	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Strozzi	Amor non si fugge	85	Strozzi	Amor non si fugge	85
Mozart	Fountains of Rome	96	God and the universe	83	Stokowski	On Time	41	Strozzi	L’amante segreto	85	Strozzi	L’Eraclito amoroso, ‘Udite amanti’	85
Eine kleine Nachtmusik	Pines of Rome	96	On Time	41	Stokowski	Piano Concerto No 2, Op 126	41	Strozzi	Le tre Grazie a Venere	85	Suk	Serenade, Op 6	32
Fantasia, K475	Roman Festivals	96	Piano Concerto No 2, Op 126	41	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Piano Concerto No 22, K 482	The Birds	96	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stokowski	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Piano Sonata, K331 – Turkish March (transcr Stokowski)	Respighi-Rossini	96	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Stokowski	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Quintet, K452 (arr Françaix)	La boutique fantasque	96	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Sinfonia concertante, K364	Rossi, L	85	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stokowski	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Symphony No 34, K338/409	Fan battaglia i miei pensieri	85	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Stokowski	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Violin Concertos – No 2, K211; No 5, K219	Rossi, M	85	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Muhly	Toccata	85	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stokowski	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Four Studies	Rutter	80	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Stokowski	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Honest Music	Lord, thou hast been our refuge	80	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Mussorgsky	Psalm 150	80	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stokowski	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
A Night on the Bare Mountain (transcr Stokowski)	Psalmfest	80	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Stokowski	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Mussorgsky, orch Ravel	This is the day	80	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Pictures at an Exhibition	S		Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stokowski	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
N	Nielsen	96	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Stokowski	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Nørgård, P	Symphonies – Nos 2, 4, 5 & 6	 37	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
O	Ortiz	85	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stokowski	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Ortiz	Ricercar	85	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Stokowski	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
P	Parry	83	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Parry	La belle dame sans merci	83	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Stokowski	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Who can dwell with greatness!	Pärt	83	Tempo di valse, Op 136 No 5	41	Stokowski	Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96
Pärt			Traditional Slavic Christmas Music	42	Stokowski	Six Characteristic Pieces, Op 132 – No 2, Study; No 4, Roundel	41	Strozzi	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96	Suk	Serenade for Strings in E flat major	96

Martin Shaw

The musical passions of the star of TV dramas Judge John Deed and Inspector George Gently

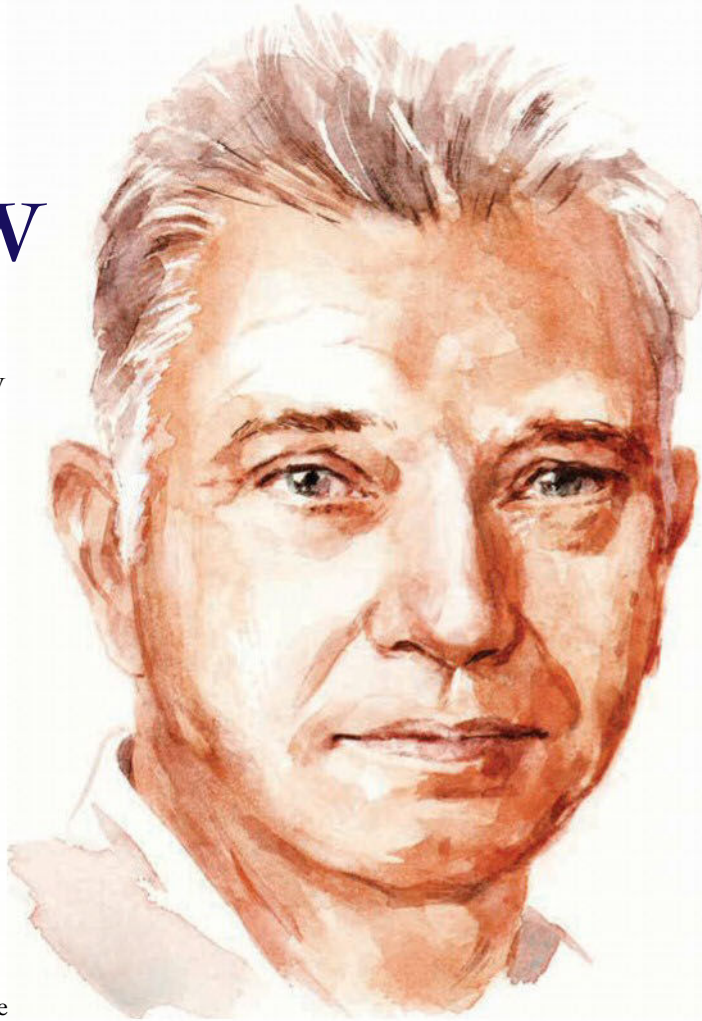
The music I listened to growing up was fairly eclectic. My parents bought me a Dansette record player and we would play The Everly Brothers and Cliff Richard. My mum loved soft rock'n'roll and used to dance around the room to it. There was an all-too-brief jazz revival at the end of the '50s that was more my kind of music though – Terry Lightfoot, Chris Barber and Kenny Ball.

But I had an interest in classical music, too, which started at school. We had a drama teacher who was very modern and revolutionary for the '50s and, at drama club after school in the school hall, he would play classical music to 'free us up' and start the class. It would be the light classics – *Danse macabre*, *The Planets*, *Le coq d'or*. This led on to a music club which met at lunchtimes and included one or two teachers as well as pupils. This was really my introduction to listening deeply – we did nothing but close our eyes. Concentration was easier back then – we only had two TV channels, we didn't have computers. So after that I used to save my pocket money to buy LPs of classical music. I remember Decca's Ace of Clubs series cost 21 shillings each. The first classical record I bought had the *Peer Gynt* Suite on one side and Ravel's *Boléro* on the other.

I never learnt an instrument because I found it hard to read music. I have what I'd describe as a sort of numerical dyslexia, whereby anything that's vaguely mathematical causes my brain to snap shut. I have a good ear though, and taught myself to play guitar. I have a keyboard which I like to tinker on to write my own music.

I sang in the choir at school, but that was it until the 1980s when I did a couple of musicals: *They're Playing Our Song*, and then *Are You Lonesome Tonight?* I was reluctant to take on the role of Elvis Presley, to be honest, but I said to my friend Bill Kenwright, 'If we do this, the sound can't be poor like it often is in West End musicals – it needs to sound like it does in a rock concert.' I didn't have singing lessons for the role, I was really in at the deep end – but my actor training came in useful, in terms of opening up my throat and using my diaphragm. I did it for over a year, and it was exhausting, physically and emotionally.

It's even harder for opera singers. I used to go to a wonderful woman called Bettina Jonic who ran classes at the Coliseum for opera singers and actors together. We were all professionals, and anyone who had a problem with a particular role they were playing would bring it to the class. One lady had a principal part at ENO and said, 'Every time I sing this particular line, the conductor scowls.' 'Sing the line,' said Bettina, and then: 'Okay, what does it mean?' And she didn't know. So she asked the actors, and we were all feeling smug because we did. And of course, once the singer knew



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what the line meant, the light came on. 'Now I have an exercise for the actors,' said Bettina. 'Take a speech from a play you're in, say it in exactly 58 seconds and, while you're doing it, strike your right knee with your hand 17 times.' We were completely incapable.

There are some operatic voices that I love – Joseph Calleja, Kiri Te Kanawa, Pavarotti, Lucia Popp. I've seen *Otello* at Glyndebourne, and *The Love of Three Oranges* at ENO. But overall I tend to judge opera by acting standards – which is probably why I don't go as often as perhaps I should. I do go to concerts though – albeit occasionally. I live in the wilds of Norfolk, and the last concert I went to was the Bach *Magnificat* and the Vivaldi *Gloria* in Norwich – it was absolutely brilliant.

I always put aside time to listen to classical music at home and in the car. And when I'm working on a script it's a necessity – Vivaldi, Telemann or, if I'm learning lines, Bach, particularly the Cello Suites. And if I want to be uplifted, then I've always got my recording of Handel's *Messiah* from 1954, with Malcolm Sargent and the Huddersfield Choral Society. It still sounds wonderful.

Martin Shaw appears in Hobson's Choice at London's Vaudeville Theatre until September 10; for tickets, call 0330 333 4814 or visit nimaxtheatres.com

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